

## Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative



### Executive Summary

Just over a year ago, Ireland, Kenya and Mexico formed a “Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security” (WPS), pledging to make WPS “a top priority” of their respective presidencies in September, October and November 2021.<sup>1</sup> During the press conference on the Council’s programme of work for September 2021, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) described the initiative as “a golden thread” that would run through the Irish, Kenyan and Mexican presidencies.<sup>2</sup>

Between December 2021 and September 2022, eight more countries—Albania, Brazil, France, Gabon, Niger, Norway, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the UK—signed on to a 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS, which built on the presidency trio initiative and committed these members, too, to making WPS a “top priority” during their presidencies.<sup>3</sup> These shared commitments—including ensuring a strong representation of diverse women

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021). See Annex I.

<sup>2</sup> See also: Letter dated 3 February 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/91).

<sup>3</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021). See Annex II.

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civil society briefers in Council meetings and requesting the inclusion of a gender analysis in UN briefings to the Council—were also endorsed by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. One year on from the launch of the WPS presidencies initiative is a good time to reflect on its successes, challenges, and possible future options.

This report analyses the WPS presidencies initiative situating it against the backdrop of difficult Council dynamics on WPS and considering aspects such as Council meetings, products, and briefers' participation, including gender balance and measures supporting the safe participation of women civil society briefers. The report covers the period from September 2021 to September 2022, although it also contains some references to events in October 2022, such as the decision of incoming members Ecuador, Malta and Switzerland to sign on to the Statement of Shared Commitments.<sup>4</sup>

While not intended as an exhaustive analysis of the commitments' implementation, this report aims at providing an overview of some of the activities of the Council members that undertook the WPS commitments and highlighting best practices. This report is the first to analyse this elected member-led initiative and—through its survey of both publicly available data and conversations with Council members on behind-the-scenes aspects of the initiative—offers a useful starting point for further research.<sup>5</sup>

Creative, cross-regional, and informal, the WPS presidencies initiative brought heightened visibility to the agenda at the Council, moving the focus away from understanding progress on the agenda through new WPS Council products in favour of creating momentum around implementation.

### Maintaining Commitments

The WPS presidencies initiative is the first time that a range of specific commitments on WPS has been undertaken across multiple Council presidencies. This initiative translated into a high number of women civil society representatives briefing the Council. Between

September 2021 and September 2022, participating members hosted 78 women civil society briefers, which includes Ireland setting a record of 16 women civil society briefers during its September 2021 presidency. (Albania, with 13 in June 2022, and Norway, with 11 in January 2022, also added significantly to this number.) By comparison, the Council invited 41 women civil society briefers for the whole of 2019,<sup>6</sup> a number which dropped to 28 during the COVID pandemic in 2020.<sup>7</sup>

The WPS presidencies initiative included commitments regarding formal meetings, and with five meetings on WPS since the start of the year, 2022 has seen the highest number of Council meetings on WPS since the inception of the agenda in 2000. Among these was the first formal Council meeting on reprisals against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives, which was held at ministerial level in January. Between September 2021 and September 2022, members strengthened WPS language in several Council products and highlighted WPS issues through dedicated press stakeouts. Some members took the initiative of communicating with UN briefers beforehand, emphasising the importance of including a gender analysis in their briefings.

Convening more meetings with a focus on WPS-related issues and adding more women civil society briefers, while conferring heightened visibility, does not automatically translate into better implementation of the WPS agenda or meaningful change, as civil society groups monitoring this issue are particularly aware.<sup>8</sup> The initiative was created “to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda and to help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality that has hampered the realisation of its full potential”.<sup>9</sup>

During some months, however, the golden thread of WPS was barely discernible among other priorities and the Council's regular reporting and mandate cycles. Indeed, even though most of the commitments stem directly from actions that all UN member states are already supposed to carry out in accordance with Security Council resolutions,

4 Women and peace and security (S/PV.9158 Resumption 1); Joint statement on Women, Peace and Security, 20 October 2022 <https://www.norway.no/en/missions/un/news/joint-statement-on-women-peace-and-security/>

5 This involved numerous informal conversations with Council members as well as the use of a questionnaire. We express our gratitude to the Council members, UN and NGO colleagues who generously granted us their time to discuss the initiative.

6 Data from NGO Working Group on WPS, “Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2019”, (2020) <https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/NGOWG-Mapping-WPS-in-UNSC-2019.pdf>.

7 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2021/827), see also Kaavya Asoka, “Support Civil Society at the UN Security Council” (1 July 2020) <https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/support-civil-society-security-council/>

8 NGO Working Group on WPS, “2022 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security” 3 October 2022 [www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org](https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org)

9 Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).



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implementation of the shared commitments has been uneven among participating members.

Members taking part in the WPS presidencies initiative committed to “[d]rawing attention to, and following up on, the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers”.<sup>10</sup> While members have echoed some of the civil society briefers’ concerns and recommendations during Council meetings and in some Council outcomes, it appears that most of the members that have signed on to the Statement of Shared Commitments have yet to develop systematic processes to follow up on briefers’ recommendations and concerns. Our report also suggests that only some members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative adopted a systematic approach to requesting a gender analysis from UN briefers. Members participating in the initiative committed to including “substantive gender perspectives” in signature events that were not directly focused on WPS,<sup>11</sup> and have included language on women and gender in the concept notes for several of their non-WPS-focused signature events. But the extent to which gender perspectives were integrated varied considerably, at times taking the form of cursory references to, for instance, “women” or “gender”.

### Recommendations

The report provides some recommendations for current and future participating members to take this initiative forward.

Council members could enhance cross-presidency planning to promote robust and continuous engagement on WPS across the Council’s work. This could include strategically planning activities such as Council meetings and stakeouts to maximise their impact, focusing on situations that have not received adequate Council attention, capitalising on the expertise and recommendations shared during the WPS Informal Experts Group (IEG) meetings, and coordinating positions on key WPS objectives in, for instance, negotiations on UN peace operations’ mandate renewals.

Members should continue to invite diverse women civil society

representatives to brief the Council regularly—and then also follow up on their information and recommendations. Members may also wish to develop ways to monitor the impact of their commitment to follow up on civil society briefers’ recommendations.

It is essential that Council members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briever, including carrying out risk assessment, developing protection plans and responding to any reprisals. Members should condemn all attacks against civil society briefers and ensure that the UN has sufficient capacity to work on reprisals.

Planning well in advance of the start of a Council presidency may help members in fulfilling their commitment to “[e]nsuring [a] strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers”<sup>12</sup> and in evaluating risks and developing appropriate risk-mitigation strategies; this would include working with civil society organisations and the UN system, as well as coordinating with like-minded Council members.

All members may want to consider asking UN briefers to provide substantive updates to the Council on issues relevant to the WPS agenda. This can be done bilaterally, but also during open meetings, particularly where the presentation of gender elements is insufficient or absent altogether.

Members should also continue to highlight clear and specific messages at their WPS press stakeouts.

Maintaining the momentum and the clear and substantive implementation of the shared commitments across participating members will be crucial for the legacy of this initiative and its goal of advancing the implementation of the WPS agenda “in concrete and tangible ways”.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, while this report concentrates on the WPS presidencies initiative, the purview of the WPS agenda remains wider than this initiative and the agenda’s Council-based dimension. Always, as member states themselves have emphasised, the main objective should be the holistic and substantive implementation of the agenda and its impact on the ground.

## Background

It is useful to situate the WPS presidency trio initiative against the backdrop of recent Council dynamics on this file. The last time Council dynamics on WPS were directly tested on a WPS thematic product was in October 2020, when a draft resolution proposed by Russia to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the first WPS resolution, resolution 1325, did not garner the nine affirmative votes needed to pass.<sup>14</sup> Several members questioned the added value of a text consisting mainly of previously agreed language, maintaining instead that implementation of the WPS agenda should be prioritised. It seems, too, that some members perceived the proposed text

as not being well-balanced by focusing on socioeconomic issues over rights-based aspects.<sup>15</sup>

This followed the fraught negotiations of the two most recent WPS texts, both adopted in 2019. Resolution 2467, which recognised the importance of adopting a survivor-centred approach in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, was the first WPS resolution not to be adopted unanimously. Despite obtaining concessions during negotiations, China and Russia abstained, citing concerns about what they perceived as the undue expansion of the Council’s mandate.<sup>16</sup> Further, the US threatened

<sup>10</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Russian Federation: draft resolution (S/2020/1054). Vote: China, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa, and Viet Nam voted in favour of the proposed text. Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the UK, and the US abstained.

<sup>15</sup> Security Council Report, 2020. “Women, Peace and Security: Vote on a Draft Resolution” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2020/10/women-peace-and-security-vote-on-a-draft-resolution.php>

<sup>16</sup> Women and peace and security (S/PV.8514); Security Council Report, 2019. “In Hindsight: Negotiations on Resolution 2467 on Sexual Violence in Conflict” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2019/05/in-hindsight-negotiations-on-resolution-2467-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict.php>

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a veto over the proposed inclusion of language on sexual and reproductive health and, equally, rejected a fallback proposal by then-holder Germany, based on agreed language from WPS resolution 2106 on “non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal, and livelihood support”. While the omission of language on sexual and reproductive health in resolution 2467 did not erode rights that have already otherwise been recognised, it nevertheless triggered concerns about the agenda’s future and the Council’s ability to preserve the normative advances the WPS agenda had achieved.<sup>17</sup>

The second WPS resolution of 2019, resolution 2493, was adopted in the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 and reiterated the need for the “full implementation” of the agenda. Although this resolution marked a return to consensus, negotiations were again difficult, and some Council members and civil society actors regretted the text’s lack of ambition. The resolution’s initiator, South Africa, had to make several concessions—including on the IEG on WPS and on language on women human rights defenders—to secure consensus.<sup>18</sup> For instance, it appears that a proposed reference which called for the IEG co-chairs to submit an annual update on progress towards implementing the recommendations presented at its meetings was unacceptable to China and Russia and was removed. In addition, while a majority of members threatened to abstain if a direct reference to “women human rights defenders” were deleted from the draft, China and Russia objected, and the final text included a more indirect reference to “those who protect and promote human rights”. Further, while sexual and reproductive health was never explicitly mentioned in any of the drafts, during negotiations the US seemingly argued that they could not support the “full” implementation of the agenda because that would include Council resolutions containing sexual and reproductive health references. Despite the ultimate consensus and the retention of “full implementation”, some members believed that the negotiation process itself exacerbated the already difficult Council dynamics on this file.<sup>19</sup>

Against the backdrop of this uneasy climate, most Council members—and several civil society actors—have come to emphasise the

importance of preserving and implementing the existing normative framework of the agenda over its further development through new WPS resolutions, with the goal of avoiding regression on agreed WPS language. For instance, in the aftermath of the adoption of resolution 2467, Allen and Shepherd suggested that, rather than pursuing a new resolution, it would probably have been wiser “to put the agenda into maintenance mode”.<sup>20</sup> The 2019 NGO Working Group on WPS’ open letter to UN Permanent Representatives providing recommendations ahead of the October annual WPS open debate stated: “As the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325 (2000) approaches, outcomes that damage or fail to advance the core tenets of the WPS agenda, or endorse anything less than full implementation, are unacceptable.”<sup>21</sup>

The prevalence and endurance of the view that it is better not to have a Council product, rather than a product that is redundant or regressive, is further shown by recent decisions by some elected members not to pursue plans for new Council products on WPS. It appears that while the possibility of an outcome ahead of the WPS open debates in October and June 2022 and October 2021 was informally considered by Gabon, Albania and Kenya, respectively, in each case the decision was taken not to go forward because of the perception that a strong Council outcome on WPS would be elusive in light of substantively unchanged dynamics on this file.

The WPS presidencies initiative can be understood in this challenging context. It appears that behind the initiative lay a will to strengthen Council-level engagement on the agenda and its visibility through means *other* than new WPS outcomes in order to avoid further exacerbating acrimonious dynamics and thereby helping the Council to emerge from the shadow cast by the difficult negotiations on these issues in recent years. In this sense, the WPS presidencies initiative is an informal project that attempts to achieve results in partnership, eschewing some of the more formal aspects of the Security Council’s work (for example, the adoption of outcomes) that would have proved difficult, and perhaps counterproductive. The next sections describe how the proponents articulated the trio initiative and its subsequent evolution.

17 See Christine Chinkin and Madeleine Rees, “Commentary on Security Council Resolution 2467: Continued State Obligation and Civil Society Action on Sexual Violence in Conflict”, LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security 15 - <https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security>; Louise Allen and Laura J. Shepherd, “In pursuing a new resolution on sexual violence Security Council significantly undermines women’s reproductive rights”, LSE Women, Peace and Security blog, 25 April 2019 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/>; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Gutting the Substance of a Security Council Resolution on Sexual Violence”, Just Security, 24 April 2019 [www.justsecurity.org](http://www.justsecurity.org)

18 Security Council Report, 2019. “In Hindsight: Negotiations on Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security” (December 2019 Monthly Forecast) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2019-12/in-hindsight-negotiations-on-resolution-2493-on-women-peace-and-security.php>

19 Security Council Report, 2020. “Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20” (Research Report) [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/research\\_report\\_women\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_2020.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/research_report_women_peace_and_security_2020.pdf)

20 Louise Allen and Laura J. Shepherd, “In pursuing a new resolution on sexual violence Security Council significantly undermines women’s reproductive rights”, LSE Women, Peace and Security blog, 25 April 2019 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/>

21 NGO Working Group on WPS, Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations: Recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, 22 October 2019 [www.womenpeacesecurity.org](http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org)

# The WPS Presidency Trio Initiative

On 31 August 2021, Ireland circulated a joint statement of commitments on WPS, with Kenya and Mexico, to Council members. The Statement of Shared Commitments, which was negotiated and agreed among the three members, says that they pledged to make WPS “a top priority, in concrete and tangible ways” during their respective back-to-back presidencies to “help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality that has hampered the realisation of [the agenda’s] full potential, especially on the ground”.<sup>22</sup> (A copy of the statement can be found in Annex I.) During the press conference on the Council programme of work for September 2021, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) described the initiative as “a golden thread” that would run through the Irish, Kenyan and Mexican presidencies.

According to the statement, Ireland, Kenya and Mexico held a common objective of ensuring that “WPS is integrated fully into country-specific and other discussions on the Council’s agenda”.<sup>23</sup> Although other Council members had previously integrated similar commitments into their presidencies and Council memberships, this was the first time that a fairly broad list of WPS-focused commitments had been undertaken across consecutive presidencies.<sup>24</sup>

The commitments consisted mainly of actions already identified in WPS resolutions, as well as some novel elements. The shared commitments’ overarching goal of ensuring that WPS be fully integrated into Council discussions—and the specific goal of ensuring strong WPS language in its products—can be traced back to the decision in resolution 2242 to integrate WPS concerns across all country-specific situations on the Council’s agenda. In this regard, the members of the trio also committed to make WPS “an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council over the three months”.<sup>25</sup>

One of the pledges undertaken by the presidency trio was to commit to a “[s]trong representation of diverse women civil society briefers in Security Council meetings”.<sup>26</sup> This is consistent with resolution 2242, which expresses the Council’s intention to invite civil society briefers, including women’s organisations, to country-specific and thematic meetings, and resolution 2467 (2019), which welcomes regular briefings by women from civil society, “particularly in country-specific meetings”. The explicit emphasis on diversity in the commitments statement adds to language on women civil society briefers already found in the WPS resolutions.<sup>27</sup>

Another commitment was to request “the inclusion of gender analysis in briefings by the UN to the Council”,<sup>28</sup> which can be traced back to resolution 2122 (2013) requesting the then Department of

Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), as well as “relevant senior officials”, to update the Council on issues relevant to WPS “as part of their regular briefings”.

One of the elements introduced by the trio statement was the WPS press stakeouts. These have consisted of statements delivered by participants in the initiative, usually on a country-specific situation on the Council’s agenda.

Another element which went beyond what is strictly mandated by the WPS resolutions was the commitment to highlighting the positive impact of the IEG, which the Council set up pursuant to resolution 2242 (2015).<sup>29</sup> Council members are generally appreciative of the work of the IEG, which meets regularly during the year to discuss WPS issues prevalently in country-specific situations.<sup>30</sup> The trio’s pledge to stress the IEG’s positive impact is significant given earlier resistance by China and Russia. China and Russia have attended the IEG meetings since committing to do so at the October 2020 WPS open debate, having previously done so rarely and having earlier resisted adding a reference to resolution 2493 calling on the IEG co-chairs to submit an annual update on progress towards implementing recommendations presented during IEG meetings.<sup>31</sup> More recently, Russia levelled accusations of politicisation at the IEG during the 2022 WPS annual open debate.<sup>32</sup>

The trio’s statement also included a commitment on women’s participation in peace processes, a key aspect of several Council outcomes on WPS over the years. The Security Council has called for women’s participation in peace processes since resolution 1325, with its most recent WPS product—resolution 2493—echoing previous Council calls for women’s inclusion and participation in peace talks. Resolution 2122 requested the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys and Special Representatives to update the Council “on progress in inviting women to participate, including through consultations with civil society, including women’s organizations, in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding”. The trio’s Statement of Shared Commitments went beyond this language, committing participants to call for the UN to ensure women’s “full, equal and meaningful participation” in peace processes it leads and co-leads—advancing the objective of the 8 March 2021 Arria-formula meeting titled: “Call to Lead by Example: Ensuring the Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation of Women in UN-led Peace Processes”.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Louise Olsson, Angela Muvumba Sellström, Patty Chang, Torunn L. Tryggstad, Peter Wallensteen and Ingebjørg Finnbakk, “Sweden as an Elected Member of the UN Security Council: Promoting Women, Peace and Security as Core Council Business, 2017–18”, PRIO Paper, 2021 [www.prio.org](http://www.prio.org)

<sup>25</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> The WPS resolutions have often assumed ‘women’ as a unified group. See Gina Heathcote, “Security Council Resolution 2242 on Women, Peace and Security: Progressive Gains or Dangerous Development?” (2018) 32 (4) Global Society.

<sup>28</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).

<sup>29</sup> In resolution 2467 the Security Council “[r]ecognizes the work” of the IEG, while in resolution 2493 it “[t]akes note” of it.

<sup>30</sup> For more on the IEG, see Security Council Report, 2020. “Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20” (Research Report) 3–4 and our list of IEG meetings: Security Council Report, “Meetings of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security” <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Meetings-of-the-Informal-Experts-Group-on-WPS.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> This was based on a recommendation made in the Secretary-General’s 2019 WPS annual report. Security Council Report, 2020. “Women, Peace and Security: The Agenda at 20” (Research Report) 9.

<sup>32</sup> Women and peace and security (S/PV.9158).

<sup>33</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021). The 8 March 2021 Arria-formula meeting was co-hosted by 12 Council members: Ireland, Mexico, Estonia, France, Kenya, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the UK, the US, and Viet Nam. See Security Council Report, 2021. “Women, Peace and Security: Arria-formula Meeting” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2021/03/women-peace-and-security-arria-formula-meeting.php>

## Building on the Trio Initiative

On 1 December 2021, Niger and Norway, together with then incoming Council members Albania and the UAE, issued a Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS. (A copy of this statement can be found in Annex II.) The statement, in which these members pledge to make WPS a “top priority” during their presidencies and to ensure that the agenda is “fully and meaningfully integrated into all aspects of the Council’s work”, clearly builds on the presidency trio initiative undertaken by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico.<sup>34</sup> It appears that a key goal for Norway, which led on the 1 December 2021 statement, was to expand the trio initiative by making the statement less specific to the participating members. This was to allow any Council member committed to implementing the WPS agenda throughout their work at the Council to join the initiative, including after the end of Norway’s Council term in December 2022, while at the same time retaining and expanding on the substantive elements of the trio’s statement.

Several Council members later endorsed the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments, including trio members Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. Brazil announced that it had joined the initiative during the 8 March 2022 open debate titled “Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda through partnerships: Women’s economic inclusion and participation as a key to building peace”. On 23 March 2022, the UK—the penholder on WPS—became the first permanent member to join the WPS presidencies initiative. France endorsed the commitments during the 15 June 2022 open debate titled “Keeping the promises: the role of regional organizations in implementing the women, peace and security agenda in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force”. Gabon joined in September ahead of its October presidency of the Council, while incoming members Ecuador, Malta and Switzerland, which joined in October 2022, are the most recent participants in this initiative at the time of writing.<sup>35</sup>

It appears that the US, which is the penholder on conflict-related sexual violence, evaluated the possibility of participating in the WPS presidencies initiative; however, it eventually decided against joining. It seems that the decision was due in part to a US policy position against undertaking any Council presidency commitment and concerns over some of the phrasing used in the statement.

The 1 December 2021 statement—which was negotiated among Albania, Niger, Norway, and the UAE—echoed many of the commitments already undertaken by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico, including striving to achieve gender parity among invited Security Council briefers and ensuring a “strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers”.<sup>36</sup> Other returning elements included highlighting the Council’s discussions on WPS through dedicated press stakeouts and calling for the UN to lead by example in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the peace processes it leads or co-leads.

One of the elements which the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments adds to the trio version is an explicit focus on women peacebuilders and human rights defenders. This includes “[s]upporting the safe participation of civil society briefers” in Council meetings, taking “a zero-tolerance approach” on reprisals, and “calling for accountability for such acts”.<sup>37</sup> It appears that these elements were added in order to begin introducing a more systematic approach to the safe participation of women civil society briefers, including practices such as risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies. (Subsequently, the Council held its first formal meeting on reprisals against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives in January 2022, during the presidency of Norway.<sup>38</sup>)

These developments are particularly noteworthy in light of the complicated dynamics on this issue within the wider Council membership. As noted above, language on women human rights defenders proved highly contentious during the negotiations of resolution 2493 when many Council members threatened to abstain if draft language referring directly to women human rights defenders were deleted, while China and Russia strongly resisted its inclusion.<sup>39</sup> This friction eventually led to the final compromise text, which “encourages Member States to create safe and enabling environments for civil society, including formal and informal community women leaders, women peacebuilders, political actors, and *those who protect and promote human rights*”.<sup>40</sup>

Another novel element is a pledge to follow up on recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers in both “Council meetings and other available opportunities”.<sup>41</sup> There is also a specific commitment to sharing statements and recommendations by civil society briefers “as a reminder to briefers, and requesting UN briefers to reflect on previous civil society recommendations to the Council”.<sup>42</sup>

The 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments includes a pledge committing participants to “[u]pholding the provisions of all previous Security Council Resolutions pertaining to the [WPS] agenda”.<sup>43</sup> The inclusion of this commitment was seemingly aimed at preventing the shared commitments from being understood and implemented in isolation from the wider agenda by participating members.

In terms of Council meetings, the 1 December 2021 statement retained a commitment that was already present in the trio’s version on incorporating “substantive gender perspectives” in signature events which are not directly focused on WPS.<sup>44</sup> However, the 1 December 2021 statement introduced a notable change regarding the hosting of WPS-focused Council meetings. The trio statement called for WPS to be the focus of at least one mandated geographic

34 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

35 This report covers the period from September 2021 to September 2022. Therefore, it does not cover Gabon’s October 2022 presidency.

36 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

37 Ibid.

38 This open debate was preceded by the February 2020 Arria-formula meeting on reprisals against women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders who engage with the Council and its subsidiary bodies which was co-hosted by Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, and the UK. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2020/02/aria-formula-meeting-on-reprisals-against-women-human-rights-defenders-and-women-peacebuilders.php>

39 Security Council Report, 2019. “In Hindsight: Negotiations on Resolution 2493 on Women, Peace and Security” (December 2019 Monthly Forecast) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2019-12/in-hindsight-negotiations-on-resolution-2493-on-women-peace-and-security.php>

40 Emphasis added. To note, in their statements after the vote, Russia and China distanced themselves from this language, with China reserving its position vis-à-vis this paragraph and Russia claiming that the resolution contained “a number of provisions that go beyond the Security Council’s mandate”. Women and peace and security (S/PV.8649).

41 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021).



## Building on the Trio Initiative

meeting over the three months of the initiative. The 1 December 2021 statement rephrased this, committing participating presidencies to making “WPS-related issues an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council *or* specifically host a WPS signature event in each Presidency”.<sup>45</sup> That is, in the 1 December 2021 version of the statement, members can implement this

commitment through *either* focusing a mandated geographic meeting on WPS *or* a signature event. Hence, this change introduced the hosting of thematic WPS meetings as a way to fulfil the commitment related to WPS-focused meetings, which was previously only through geographic meetings.

## Maintaining Commitments

While this report is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the WPS commitments’ implementation, it provides an initial overview of some of the activities carried out by Council members under key areas of the commitments. This section reviews actions under seven areas of the shared commitments which correspond to one or more specific commitments.<sup>46</sup> The seven areas are:

- WPS-focused Council meetings and gender perspectives in signature events
- WPS language in Council products
- WPS press stakeouts
- Gender balance among briefers and participation of women civil society briefers
- Safe participation of civil society briefers
- Following up on recommendations by civil society briefers
- Requesting a gender analysis by UN briefers

### WPS-focused Council meetings and gender perspectives in signature events

Since September 2021, several Council meetings have included a focus on WPS issues. Indeed, 2022 is on track to become the year with the highest number of meetings (5) officially held under the WPS agenda item since the agenda’s inception in 2000. At the same time, not all presidencies that signed on to the shared commitments fulfilled their pledges regarding meetings with a focus on WPS, and integration of WPS issues across Council discussions remains uneven. It could also be argued that there have been fewer regular geographic meetings clearly dedicated to WPS discussions than might have been expected from the commitments, including the reference to making WPS “an explicit focus” of “mandated geographic” meetings.<sup>47</sup>

Norway explicitly devoted a mandated meeting on a country-specific situation to WPS: as Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) stated during the 12 January 2022 open briefing on the situation in Yemen, Norway elected to focus the meeting on WPS “to draw attention to the urgency of strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding”.<sup>48</sup> Nearly all Council members directly

referenced the situation of women in Yemen in their statements, including members who have not signed up to the WPS presidencies initiative. Ghana, for instance, said that “the women of Yemen have an equal right in determining how the conflict should be resolved” and called for the prioritisation of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian responses.<sup>49</sup> Members’ WPS focus varied in their degree of depth and assertiveness. While some members referenced WPS issues in passing, Ireland focused its statement on WPS. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) said that the persistent exclusion of Yemeni women from political and peace initiatives is unjustifiable. In no uncertain terms, Byrne Nason lamented the fact that no women had been included in the UN-facilitated prisoner exchange negotiations. While she welcomed the commitment expressed by UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg to consult with women’s groups, Byrne Nason stressed that “consultation should not be a substitute for meaningful participation” and strongly encouraged Grundberg and all parties to work towards securing Yemeni women seats at the negotiating table.<sup>50</sup> The Irish statement also follows up on the commitment to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes led or co-led by the UN.

Although not a mandated geographic meeting, during its September 2021 presidency Ireland organised a briefing to hear from Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed about her 12 September 2021 visit to Somalia, which was aimed at supporting increased women’s representation and participation in political processes, including in the 2021–2022 parliamentary elections.<sup>51</sup> Shukria Dini, the co-Founder and Executive Director of the Somali Women’s Studies Centre, also briefed. The meeting illustrated the use of the presidency initiative to build momentum for a Council focus on WPS issues through the various tools available to members. In this regard, before the start of the meeting, IEG co-chairs Ireland and Mexico delivered a message to the press to highlight key messages<sup>52</sup> and, during the meeting, Mexico pointed out how the briefing was a useful complement to the IEG’s work on Somalia.<sup>53</sup>

45 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021), emphasis added.

46 The seven areas are grouped thematically across both statements of shared commitments and were identified for both their salience within the commitments list and feasibility of the study. However, whenever an example cited contributes to the implementation of one of the commitments not directly monitored, this is noted in the report.

47 To be clear: as highlighted above, the two statements differ on how their commitment regarding meetings with a focus on WPS is phrased. Ireland, Kenya and Mexico committed to “[m]aking WPS an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council over the three months” of their presidencies. The 1 December 2021 statement committed participants to: “Making WPS-related issues an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council *or* specifically host a WPS signature event in each Presidency” (emphasis added).

48 The situation in the Middle East (Yemen) (S/PV.8946).

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 The situation in Somalia (S/PV.8867).

52 Informal comments to the media by Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), on behalf of Ireland and Mexico (28 September 2021) <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c839g4id>

53 Letter dated 19 July 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/668). This was the first IEG meeting on Somalia and included a focus on women’s participation in political processes in the country.

## Maintaining Commitments

All members expressed support for Somalia's commitment to reserving 30 percent of parliamentary seats for women, with some members also stressing that women's participation requires action broader than achieving the 30 percent quota.<sup>54</sup> Some members, including Norway and the UK, openly welcomed the opportunity of a WPS-focused meeting on Somalia. France expressed support for the inclusion of the WPS agenda in all country-specific discussions, stressing that "this cross-cutting approach is crucial" to the implementation of the WPS normative framework.<sup>55</sup> In its statement, Kenya argued that discussing the WPS agenda in Somalia required centring the threat of terrorism and going "beyond the parliamentary dimension".<sup>56</sup> While expressing support for the 30 percent quota, Ambassador Martin Kimani (Kenya) said that to embrace the WPS agenda "for the situation of women in Somalia is by necessity [...] to be opposed in a profound fashion to the continuity of Al-Shabaab" and that cutting off Al-Shabaab's military capability and funding "is one of the most important initiatives we can undertake on behalf of the women of Somalia and the women of the Horn of Africa".<sup>57</sup>

Although the WPS agenda has arguably not been central to the Council's discussions on Ukraine, members hosted two ad hoc open briefings on the war in Ukraine focusing on issues relevant to the WPS agenda. The first took place during the UK's April 2022 presidency and the second during Albania's June 2022 presidency. During the 11 April 2022 meeting, most interventions concentrated on protection aspects while some members also called for women's inclusion in political processes aimed at overcoming the crisis. The focus of the 6 June 2022 meeting was on conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking in the context of the war in Ukraine.

Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, Council meetings on Afghanistan have regularly raised issues related to women's and girls' rights and participation. For instance, during the September 2022 meeting on Afghanistan under France's presidency, all members referred to issues such as women's rights, freedoms or participation. At the same time, some of these references reflected broader divisions among members on this file. For instance, China stressed that "safeguarding the rights and interests of Afghan women and girls also means providing them with much-needed humanitarian assistance" and called for the frozen Afghan assets "to be fully returned".<sup>58</sup> (Following the Taliban takeover, the US froze \$7 billion in assets held by the Afghan central bank in the US.) In a clear reference to US engagement in Afghanistan, Russia said that "the result of the country's 20-year democratization process has been to put Afghan women and girls' principal right—the right to life—under threat".<sup>59</sup>

The period from September 2021 to September 2022 also saw several thematic meetings with a focus on WPS. This is in addition to the 2021 annual open debate on WPS, which fell under Kenya's presidency in October 2021, and the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, which fell under the UK's presidency in April 2022.<sup>60</sup> Mexico focused the 10 November 2021 annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations—a mandated thematic meeting—on WPS. Albania, Norway and the UAE held thematic open debates on WPS as signature events. (Incidentally, this makes Norway the only signatory to the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments to hold both a thematic signature event under the WPS agenda item and a mandated geographic meeting with a specific focus on WPS.) These meetings, which focused members' attention on specific aspects of the agenda or on the connections between WPS and other thematic issues, were: protecting women's participation in peace and security processes in January 2022 (Norway), public-private partnerships in March 2022 (UAE), and the role of regional organisations in contexts of violent takeovers in June 2022 (Albania).<sup>61</sup> These three open debates constituted the first formal Council meetings on these particular topics. With these meetings held under the WPS agenda item, 2022 has seen the highest annual number of meetings officially convened under this item since the inception of the agenda (see table below).

YEAR	MEETINGS ON WPS <sup>62</sup>
2022	5
2021	2 <sup>63</sup>
2020	3 <sup>64</sup>
2019	2
2018	2
2017	2
2016	4
2015	2
2014	2
2013	3
2012	4
2011	2
2010	3
2009	3

54 Mohammed Omer, "Somali PM reserves 30% of parliament seats for women in upcoming poll", Reuters, 11 January 2021 [www.reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). This quota was eventually not met.

55 The situation in Somalia (S/PV.8867).

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 The situation in Afghanistan (S/PV.9137).

59 Ibid.

60 In October 2021, the annual WPS open debate focused on the theme "Investing in Women in Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding". See Letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/875); Security Council Report, 2021. "Women, Peace and Security: Annual Open Debate" (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2021/10/women-peace-and-security-annual-open-debate-2.php>; WILPF, "Analysis of the 2021 Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security" <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/security-council-open-debate-women-peace-and-security-october-2021>. In April, the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence was entitled "Conflict-related sexual violence: accountability as prevention—ending cycles of sexual violence in conflict". See Letter dated 5 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/293); Security Council Report, 2022. "Conflict-related Sexual Violence: Annual Open Debate" (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/04/97598.php>

61 Security Council Report, 2022. "Protecting Women's Participation: Ministerial-Level Open Debate" (What's in Blue); Security Council Report, 2022. "Women, Peace and Security: Ministerial-level Open Debate on public-private partnerships" (What's in Blue); Security Council Report, 2022. "Ministerial-Level Open Debate: The role of regional organisations in implementing the women, peace and security agenda in contexts of seizures of power by force" (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/women-peace-and-security/>

62 This includes all formal Council meetings including adoptions.

63 One of these meetings took place via videoconference (VTC) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

64 These meetings were held as VTCs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Maintaining Commitments

YEAR	MEETINGS ON WPS <sup>62</sup>
2008	2
2007	2
2006	1
2005	1
2004	1
2003	1
2002	3
2001	1
2000	2

In terms of Council dynamics, the January 2022 open debate's focus on the impact of intimidation and reprisals on women's participation in peace and security processes is particularly significant in light of the divisions around language on women human rights defenders highlighted above.<sup>65</sup> UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, NGO Working Group on WPS Executive Director Kaavya Asoka, and Women and Children Legal Research Foundation Executive Director Zarqa Yaftali briefed. The open debate also aimed at providing impetus for Council discussion on the focus of the Secretary-General's 2022 annual report on WPS on defending women's rights and women human rights defenders, offering a further example of members participating in the WPS presidency initiative using the tools at their disposal to create continuities on key WPS issues during their Council term.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding the March 2022 open debate on public-private partnerships, members generally welcomed the focus on women's economic empowerment, which has typically received less attention in the Council's deliberations on WPS than other aspects of the agenda.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, different perspectives were visible in members' approach to this issue. The UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment, Mariam bint Mohammed Saeed Hareb Almheiri, who chaired the meeting, argued that "[i]t would be self-defeating to minimize or neglect the private sector's role in realizing the transformative goals of the [WPS] agenda".<sup>68</sup> Ireland noted that it is necessary to "acknowledge that advancing women's economic participation is not a panacea in itself" and that "women's economic empowerment is truly achievable only alongside their political and social empowerment".<sup>69</sup> Mexico argued that "socioeconomic

inequalities, entrenched poverty and the many intersectional forms of discrimination and violence" constituted one of the structural barriers to gender equality globally and called for investments to be made "in existing financial mechanisms to support women's organizations and human rights defenders" as well as for support for women peacebuilders "from the most disadvantaged groups, such as women with disabilities, women refugees, young women, female heads of households and women members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community".<sup>70</sup>

Members were generally supportive of the theme of the June 2022 open debate and highlighted a range of priorities in their discussion of the role of regional organisations in implementing the WPS agenda in the context of military coups as well as more broadly. Albania invited officials from the UN, the AU, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the League of Arab States to brief, and several members mentioned the work of other organisations in their remarks, including the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Francophonie, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Economic Community of West African States.

Members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative also committed to including "substantive gender perspectives" in signature events that were not focused on WPS.<sup>71</sup> Participating members have included language on women and gender in the concept notes for several of their non-WPS-focused signature events, including in the questions proposed by the presidency to guide the discussions.<sup>72</sup> Where this has been done, it has varied from cursory references to a few longer references. For instance, the concept note for the 12 July 2022 high-level open debate on strategic communications in UN peacekeeping operations organised by Brazil included a section on advancing the WPS agenda.<sup>73</sup>

## WPS language in Council products

According to the 2022 Secretary-General's WPS annual report, WPS language in Council decisions "has become more detailed and more specific and covers more areas".<sup>74</sup> Both the 31 August and the 1 December 2021 Statements of Shared Commitments included the objective of ensuring that strong WPS language was incorporated in Council products. Members strengthened WPS language in several Council products between September 2021 and September 2022, often after overcoming opposition.

This section provides an overview of some examples of this strengthened language as well as connected dynamics. While the commitments undertaken by the participants in the WPS presidencies

65 Letter dated 10 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/22).

66 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2022/740).

67 But see resolution 1889 (2009), through which the Security Council expressed concern "that women's capacity to engage in public decision making and economic recovery often does not receive adequate recognition or financing in post-conflict situations" and called for measures to improve women's participation in peace processes, "including by enhancing their engagement in political and economic decision-making at early stages of recovery processes".

68 Women and peace and security (S/PV.8989).

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021).

72 One of the questions to guide the 12 October 2021 open debate on "Diversity, State-building and the search for peace", organised by Kenya was: "What successful experiences can be shared by States with regard to how they have built and sustained peace by embracing diversity and inclusion from the point of view of ethnic, gender, racial, regional, religious and other identities?", see Letter dated 6 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/854). One of the questions to guide the 2 June 2022 open debate on "Strengthening accountability and justice for serious violations of international law" organised by Albania was: "What are the practical steps to be undertaken to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women and underrepresented groups, often in situations of vulnerability, at all stages of the development of accountability mechanisms, as well as in ensuring rigorous and open scrutiny of practice?", see Letter dated 24 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/418/Rev1). One of the questions for the 8 September 2021 open debate on UN transitions organised by Ireland was: "How can the Security Council ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in transition planning?", see Letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/756).

73 See Letter dated 5 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/539).

74 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2022/740).

## Maintaining Commitments

initiative may have played a role, this result arguably stems from multiple factors, including states' policy priorities and political will, the perceived urgency of the situation, key issues highlighted in UN reports and recommendations emerging from IEG meetings, as well as local and international civil society groups' briefings and lobbying of Council members.

In March 2022, the Council renewed the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). During the negotiations, China and Russia apparently contended that the initial draft of the resolution—circulated by Norway as the penholder on Afghanistan—was unrealistic and placed too much emphasis on issues such as human rights, inclusive governance and gender equality. It seems that these members also requested the removal of previously agreed language regarding the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of decision-making and the implementation of instruments concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>75</sup> It appears that China and Russia also sought to remove proposed text on integrating gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue throughout UNAMA's mandate and language calling for inclusive, representative, and participatory governance, among other matters. Nevertheless, these amendments were resisted by most other Council members and the relevant text was retained in resolution 2626, which extended UNAMA's mandate until 17 March 2023.

The new language included in resolution 2626 draws on the recommendations made by UN Women at the February 2022 IEG meeting on Afghanistan.<sup>76</sup> For instance, resolution 2626 mandates UNAMA to “engage with diverse Afghan women's organizations and networks, as well as monitor and report specifically on violations, abuses and reprisals committed against women, including against those who protect and promote human rights, journalists, health-care and humanitarian workers, as well as those previously associated with the government, police, justice and security sector”. This is consistent with issues raised by Executive Director of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation Zarqa Yaftali during her briefing on the situation of women in Afghanistan to the Council at the January open debate on protecting participation, during Norway's presidency. Yaftali had raised “women's rights, including the right of women's human rights defenders to operate freely without fear of reprisal”, and stressed the importance of UNAMA continuing to monitor the human rights situation as part of its renewed mandate.<sup>77</sup> While language on WPS in resolution 2626 may have been stronger than expected, it appears that the securing of this language does not reflect a change in the underlying dynamics on WPS, but is attributable to a combination of sustained civil society advocacy—with a key role played by Afghan women leaders—and a unified front of Council members willing to defend WPS-related language in the draft.

Although not a guarantee of success, broad demonstrations of support by Council members for proposals aimed at strengthening WPS language have also proven to be important in securing references in other contexts. For instance, during the May 2022 negotiations on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei's (UNISFA) mandate renewal, language stressing the importance of UNISFA's efforts to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in processes aimed at facilitating stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area—which was proposed by Ireland and supported by several other Council members—was included in resolution 2630.<sup>78</sup>

The argument that dynamics on WPS remain difficult in the Council appears to be corroborated by Council members' failure in September 2022 to adopt a press statement to mark one year since the Taliban's decision to ban girls from attending high school. China and Russia apparently argued that it would be inappropriate for Council members to issue a product that only focuses on one aspect of the file, and sought to include language on other issues, including text on the frozen assets of Afghanistan's central bank. Other Council members seemingly interpreted this argument as an attempt to dilute the WPS focus of the proposed statement. The differences between China and Russia and other members could not be resolved, and the press statement, which had originally been circulated by Norway, was not issued.<sup>79</sup>

Resolution 2625, which in March 2022 extended the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for one year, is another example of members strengthening WPS language against a backdrop of difficult dynamics. While the resolution contains extensive WPS-related language—including new language, which was added by the penholder (US) with input from Ireland, on UNMISS facilitating access to organisations that provide support to survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic services—during the negotiations Russia and China apparently sought the deletion of previously agreed language in several areas, particularly on WPS, climate change and human rights.<sup>80</sup> It further seems that proposed new language on supporting certain political parties in South Sudan to implement commitments and action plans on preventing conflict-related sexual violence was removed at the request of the A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya).<sup>81</sup>

The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). In its explanation of vote, Russia said that issues such as women's rights, sexual violence and corruption are “first and foremost, an internal matter for the country”, that “the Security Council and the peacekeeping mission do not have the appropriate resources to fulfil these functions”, and that the use of wording on these issues gave the impression that the resolution had been adopted by the Human Rights Council.<sup>82</sup> China said that the “Security Council is not the right forum for

75 Security Council Report, 2022. “Afghanistan: Vote on Draft Resolution on UNAMA's Mandate” (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/03/afghanistan-vote-on-draft-resolution-on-unamas-mandate.php>

76 Letter dated 1 March 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/171).

77 Women and peace and security (S/PV.8949).

78 Security Council Report, 2022. “UN Interim Security Force for Abyei: Vote on Mandate Renewal” (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/05/un-interim-security-force-for-abyei-vote-on-mandate-renewal.php>

79 As mentioned below, on 27 September 2022 Norway delivered a statement at the stakeout on this issue on behalf of the ten elected and five incoming Council members. On 30 September 2022, France, as the Council president for September, issued a press statement on behalf of Council members condemning the terrorist attack against the Kaaj Educational Centre in Kabul and reaffirming the right to education for all Afghans (SC/15048).

80 Security Council Report, 2022. “UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS): Vote on Mandate Renewal Resolution” (What's in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/03/un-mission-in-south-sudan-unmiss-vote-on-mandate-renewal-resolution.php>

81 Ibid.

82 Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan (S/PV.8994).

# Maintaining Commitments

human rights discussions” and expressed its opposition to the use of the term “human rights defenders”, adding that “there is no clear, universally accepted definition for that term that has been agreed through intergovernmental negotiations”.<sup>83</sup>

Being able to point to references to WPS-related issues in UN reports, civil society and UN briefings and in the recommendations emerging from IEG meetings has provided helpful hooks for members who intend to strengthen WPS language in Council products. Some pointed to the strength of civil society statements to the Council on WPS, as well as the attention to WPS in the Secretary-General’s reports on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), as crucial in retaining language on reprisals in UNSMIL’s mandate during the negotiations on the mission’s extension in July 2022.<sup>84</sup>

A new paragraph was added to resolution 2643, which on 13 July 2022 extended the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for one year, recognising the importance of engaging and consulting with local communities, including a diverse range of women’s organisations, to increase women’s participation in the Hodeidah Agreement’s implementation and locally-led peace initiatives. This addition, proposed by Ireland, is based on a recommendation made in 2021 by UNWomen as the secretariat of the IEG, which held a meeting on Yemen in March 2021.<sup>85</sup> A similar request by Ireland and Mexico in 2021 had been unsuccessful as the penholder (UK) apparently preferred to avoid opening the text to new elements.<sup>86</sup> (All of the press statements issued by Council members on the truce in Yemen, which lasted from 2 April to 2 October 2022, contained language on women’s participation.)<sup>87</sup>

Adopted in September 2021, resolution 2594 was the first Security Council resolution entirely focused on UN peace operations transitions. The resolution, initiated by Ireland, included WPS language directed at the UN system requesting the Secretary-General to:

*ensure that comprehensive gender analysis and technical gender expertise are included throughout all stages of mission planning, mandate implementation and review and throughout the transition process, as well as mainstreaming of a gender perspective, and to ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, and the inclusion of youth, as well as measures to safeguard the interests of persons with disabilities.*<sup>88</sup>

The concept note for the 8 September 2021 open debate on peacekeeping transitions, which preceded resolution 2594’s adoption, included a discussion question on how the Council could ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in transition planning, and the President of the Community Development Association of the Sudan Safaa Elagib Adam, who briefed the Council at the open debate, referred to WPS-related issues in her remarks.<sup>89</sup>

In December 2021, the Council adopted resolution 2616 in which it resolved to consider, when renewing mandates of peace operations that coincide with Council-mandated arms embargos, whether UN peace operations could support national authorities in tackling the transfer and diversion of arms in violation of the embargoes.<sup>90</sup> The resolution, which included some WPS-related language, emerged from the open debate on the theme “The impact of the diversion and trafficking of arms on peace and security”, one of the signature events during Mexico’s November 2021 presidency. The concept note for the debate had argued for improving the integration of recommendations on the issue of “impacts of small arms and light weapons on women and children” from the IEG and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and both briefers mentioned violence against women or gender-based violence in their remarks.<sup>91</sup>

New language on WPS was also added to other Council products, including resolution 2645, which decided that the UN Integrated Office in Haiti’s human rights unit will include dedicated capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence<sup>92</sup> and the March 2022 presidential statement on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States, proposed by the UAE, which added language on women’s participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding and encouraged “enhanced efforts to promote women’s economic empowerment and the elimination of poverty in the Arab region”.<sup>93</sup>

## WPS press stakeouts

Members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative have held WPS-focused press stakeouts in order to heighten the visibility of WPS issues in specific contexts. Between September 2021 and September 2022, seven such statements were delivered at stakeouts. Of these, one was on a thematic issue (after the 10 November 2021 annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations), while the others focused on specific countries (two stakeouts on Afghanistan, and one each on Colombia, Yemen, Haiti, and Somalia). A further statement was delivered by participants in the initiative outside the period covered in this report, on the occasion of the annual WPS open debate on 20 October 2022.

Different modalities have been used to convey these statements. On some occasions, Council members taking part in the initiative delivered different sections of the statement. In other cases, the Council president for the month delivered the statement on behalf of participating members. The latter modality became more frequent with the increasing number of participants in the initiative. On one occasion, the representative of the country on which the statement focused (Colombia) also delivered remarks at the stakeout.

It seems that the Council president for the month generally took the

83 Ibid.

84 In this regard, resolution 2647, which renewed the mission’s mandate for three months, retains text from previous UNSMIL mandates recognising the need to protect “women’s rights organisations, and women peacebuilders from threats and reprisals”. This reference was already present in resolution 2542 (2020), which had been the latest UNSMIL substantive renewal before resolution 2647. Between September 2021 and April 2022, the Council renewed UNSMIL’s mandate four times through short-term extensions because of disagreements among Council members.

85 Letter dated 17 March 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/264). Security Council Report, 2022. “Yemen: Mandate Renewal of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/07/yemen-mandate-renewal-of-the-un-mission-to-support-the-hodeidah-agreement.php>

86 Security Council Report, 2021. “Yemen: Vote on UNMHA Mandate Renewal and Consultations” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2021/07/yemen-vote-on-unmha-mandate-renewal-and-consultations.php>

87 SC/14853 (4 April), SC/14861 (13 April), SC/14923 (3 June), SC/14992 (4 August), SC/15025 (12 September), SC/15054 (5 October).

88 S/RES/2594.

89 Letter dated 24 August 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/756); UN peacekeeping operations (S/PV.8851).

90 Resolution 2616 was adopted with 12 votes in favour and the abstention of China, India and Russia.

91 Letter dated 22 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/892).

92 S/RES/2645 (2022). Mexico and the US are the penholders on Haiti.

93 S/PRST/2022/1.



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lead in identifying the focus of, and drafting, the statement. Although the process for these stakeout statements has been less formal than negotiations for Council products, the draft statements have been circulated among the participants in the WPS presidency initiative, and members have been given the opportunity to propose changes and additional language. It appears that members identified country situations based on a combination of reasons, including policy priorities and the urgency of the situation. Choosing situations where members' different national positions on country files would not prevent a united focus on WPS concerns also appears to have become a factor.

The table below summarises the stakeouts held under the WPS presidencies initiative thus far. Members have also come together to deliver statements to the press on WPS issues in other capacities.

DATE	TOPIC	PRESIDENT	PARTICIPANTS	KEY MESSAGES
28 September 2021	Somalia	Ireland	Ireland, Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced the 28 September 2021 Council meeting on Somalia, recalled the 30 June 2021 IEG meeting on the same situation</li> <li>Called for holding elections without delay, immediate action to end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, and for ensuring the safe participation of women candidates in the elections</li> </ul>
10 November 2021	Women police officers in UN peace operations	Mexico	Ireland, Kenya, Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflections from the 2021 annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations which had a focus on WPS issues</li> <li>Called for more investments in gender-responsive measures to empower women police officers in peace operations</li> </ul>
20 January 2022	Colombia	Norway	Albania, Colombia, Norway, UAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urged the full, equal and meaningful participation of women leaders in the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement</li> <li>Encouraged the prioritisation of the implementation of the ethnic chapter and the provisions on gender equality and women's rights of the peace agreement</li> <li>Called for further progress on meaningful participation in economic reintegration of women former combatants</li> </ul>
2 March 2022	Afghanistan	UAE	Albania, Brazil, Norway, UAE <sup>95</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urged women's full, equal and meaningful participation in Afghanistan</li> <li>Condemned harassment and attacks on women human rights defenders</li> </ul>
14 June 2022	Yemen	Albania	Albania, Brazil, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, UAE, UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Called on all parties to ensure women's participation in the peace process and decision-making processes in Yemen</li> <li>Expressed concern at the evidence of a policy by the Houthis of targeting politically active women</li> <li>Urged conflict parties to adopt commitments to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence</li> </ul>
23 June 2022	Afghanistan	Albania	Albania, Brazil, France, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, UAE, UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urged the Taliban to reverse policies and practices restricting Afghan women and girls' rights and freedoms</li> <li>Condemned violations, abuses and reprisals against women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, civil society activists, journalists, healthcare and humanitarian workers</li> </ul>
21 July 2022	Haiti	Brazil	Albania, Brazil, France, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, UAE, UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Called for addressing impunity for sexual and gender-based violence in Haiti</li> <li>Stressed the importance of enhancing responses to sexual and gender-based violence and increasing women's participation in the armed forces and in the National Police</li> </ul>
20 October 2022	WPS open debate and shared commitments	Gabon	Albania, Brazil, France, Gabon, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, UAE, UK, joined by former Council member Niger, and incoming members Ecuador, Malta and Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restated some of the shared commitments, including ensuring that the WPS agenda is fully integrated into all aspects of the Council's work, and supporting the safe participation of women civil society briefers in Council meetings</li> <li>Called for the UN to lead by example in ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peace processes it leads or co-leads</li> <li>Called on countries to implement the WPS agenda</li> </ul>

<sup>94</sup> E10: Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, and the UAE. I5: Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland.

<sup>95</sup> The UAE added remarks in its national capacity at the end of the statement, including that "religion cannot be used to justify extremist ideology or to excuse discrimination against women and girls".

# Maintaining Commitments

## Gender balance among briefers and participation of women civil society briefers

Both iterations of the WPS presidency statement included a commitment to gender balance, and “striving towards gender parity”, among invited Security Council briefers. Participating members also committed to “strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers”.<sup>96</sup> The implementation of these commitments led to an exceptional number of women representing civil society addressing the Council in some months. Between September 2021 and September 2022, participating members hosted 78 women civil society briefers, out of a total of 96 civil society briefers. This figure includes Ireland setting a record of 16 women civil society briefers during its September 2021 presidency, while Albania, with 13 in June 2022, and Norway, with 11 in January 2022, also contributed significantly. By comparison, the Council invited 41 women civil society briefers for the whole of 2019.<sup>97</sup>

According to the Secretary-General’s 2022 annual report on WPS, 62 women from civil society briefed the Council in 2021, which is more than ever before.<sup>98</sup> This is significant considering that “only 25 women from civil society briefed the Security Council between 2000 and 2015”.<sup>99</sup> As stated in a letter by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico to the Council, the total number of women from civil society who briefed during their trio of presidencies represented 49 percent of all women civil society briefers for the year 2021.<sup>100</sup> All civil society representatives invited by Mexico (7), Niger (2) and the UAE (6) during their presidencies were women. During its presidency, Albania invited the highest overall number of women (both from civil society and not from civil society) to brief the Council among participating members (34).

The increase in women civil society briefers in 2021 is particularly relevant in light of the sharp decrease in their number during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, with only 28 women from civil society invited to brief in 2020.<sup>101</sup> Noting the almost 40 percent decrease in women civil society representatives invited to deliver statements to the Council in the first six months of 2020, Executive Director of the NGO Working Group on WPS Kaavya Asoka said in a statement that the dramatic decrease was not merely attributable to “technical challenges but a lack of political will—a deprioritization of the voices of independent civil society despite Council members’ claims of women’s critical role in ensuring peace and security”.<sup>102</sup>

When the participating presidencies are considered together, the gender parity target among invited briefers in open meetings is narrowly missed (48.66 percent). As the table below indicates, not all members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative attained gender parity among invited briefers in open meetings and not all of them invited an equally high number of women civil society briefers to participate in such meetings.

The table shows the total number of open meetings during each month,<sup>103</sup> how many women civil society representatives briefed the Council during each month of the WPS presidencies initiative (both in total and divided by thematic and geographic meetings), the number of women invited to brief in open meetings in each month, the percentage of women briefers against the total of invited briefers in open meetings, the percentage of women among civil society briefers and the percentage of women briefers who are civil society representatives.<sup>104</sup>

Presidency	Total no. of open meetings	Women briefers	Women civil society briefers	Women civil society briefers in geographic meetings	Women civil society briefers in thematic meetings	Percentage of women briefers	Percentage of civil society briefers who are women	Percentage of women briefers who are civil society representatives
Ireland (09/2021)	15	22	16	11	5	62.86	94.12	72.73
Kenya (10/2021)	19 <sup>105</sup>	19	10	8	2	39.58	76.92	52.63
Mexico (11/2021)	13	14	7	5	2	50	100	50
Niger (12/2021)	17	9	2	2	0	25.71	100	22.22
Norway (01/2022)	15	17	11	8	3	50	84.62	64.71

96 Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021).

97 NGO Working Group on WPS, “Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2019” (2020) 15. <https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/NGOWG-Mapping-WPS-in-UNSC-2019.pdf>

98 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2022/740) 101.

99 Ibid.

100 Letter dated 3 February 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/91).

101 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2021/827) 102.

102 Kaavya Asoka, “Support Civil Society at the UN Security Council” (1 July 2020) <https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/support-civil-society-security-council/>

103 The number of open meetings includes all formal open meetings as well as open VTCs, but not adoptions, unless an adoption took place during a Council briefing, debate or open debate.

104 This was compiled according to the indication of the gendered titles Ms, Mr and Mrs found on the verbatim records of the meetings of the Security Council. It appears that the meeting records reflect titles as received by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) and the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) from the presidencies of the Council, Council members and the respective offices of UN briefers. However, the extent to which briefers self-assign these labels or can choose other, including gender-neutral, ones is unclear. The Secretary-General and Ambassadors briefing on sanction committees and Council visits were counted as briefers.

105 This includes the 28 October 2021 annual debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the AU which was held as a VTC.

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Presidency	Total no. of open meetings	Women briefers	Women civil society briefers	Women civil society briefers in geographic meetings	Women civil society briefers in thematic meetings	Percentage of women briefers	Percentage of civil society briefers who are women	Percentage of women briefers who are civil society representatives
UAE (03/2022)	21	21	6	4	2	51.22	100	28.57
UK (04/2022)	15	15	6	3	3	46.88	75	40
Albania (06/2022)	24	34	13	11	2	60.71	72.22	38.24
Brazil (07/2022)	11	12	3	2	1	57.14	75	25
France (09/2022)	19	17	4	4	0	42.50	50	23.53

Women are not a homogenous group, however.<sup>106</sup> Both versions of the shared commitments allude to this in the commitment on “strong representation of *diverse* women civil society briefers”.<sup>107</sup> Kenya invited the coordinator of the civil society organisation Butterflies with New Wings and Afro-Colombian women representative in the Special Forum on Gender, Bibiana Peñaranda, and Daniela Soto, a youth leader from the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca to the November 2021 meeting on Colombia. This was followed by the January 2022 meeting on the same situation, during which Luz Marina Giraldo, a former combatant of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, briefed the Council. Brazil invited Jineth Casso Piamba, who identifies as an indigenous woman, during the July 2022 meeting on Colombia. Ireland invited former Irish President and Chair of The Elders Mary Robinson and member of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation Youth Group Magdalene Wangui Wanyaga to brief at, respectively, the 7 September 2021 briefing on the maintenance of international peace and security and the 27 September 2021 high-level briefing marking the 25th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. However, from the available data—which does not provide information on diversity in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, age, or ability—it is not possible to determine accurately how far participating members considered these aspects when inviting civil society briefers to address the Council.

It appears that at least some of the participating members paid particular attention to issues such as inviting briefers from local and grassroots organisations rather than focusing prevalently on international NGOs, presenting both perspectives from briefers on the

ground and those living in exile, inviting briefers from a variety of countries, inviting youth representatives, and inviting women civil society representatives to offer both a gender analysis on specific geographic and thematic files and as experts on disparate fields. Two members also referred to balancing the importance of giving briefers from organisations that have never addressed the Council the chance to have their message heard with returning briefers who can offer a comparison with their previous briefings.

The prevalence of closed meetings on some situations has meant that the Council has not received briefings from women civil society representatives on these situations. Hilina Berhanu Degefa, who briefed during the April 2022 open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, was the first and so far the only civil society briever to address the Council on the conflict in northern Ethiopia.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, it appears that the Council has thus far only received two briefings from women civil society representatives on the situation in Myanmar, the most recent of which took place during the 2020 open debate on conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>109</sup>

Numbers alone do not provide a full picture of women civil society briefers’ participation in the Council. In a joint report on women civil society representatives’ participation at the Council, the NGO Working Group on WPS and Oxfam argued that for participation to be meaningful, women briefers “must not only be included in formal [Security Council] processes, but these processes and their outcomes must be shaped by the views of women civil society briefers in all their diversity”.<sup>110</sup> The next subsection provides an initial review of follow-up on recommendations and priority issues put forward by civil society representatives in the context of the WPS presidencies initiative.

<sup>106</sup> According to analysis by the NGO Working Group on WPS, however, “women are primarily referred to as a monolithic group throughout the work of the Security Council”, with the experiences of specific groups of women and girls comprising “less than 7% of all references in outcome documents and less than 6% of all references in reports of the Secretary-General in 2019, reflecting little acknowledgment of the unique challenges they face”. NGO Working Group on WPS, “Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2019” (2020) 15. <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/NGOWG-Mapping-WPS-in-UNSC-2019.pdf> See also Swati Parashar, “The WPS Agenda: A Postcolonial Critique” in “The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security” edited by Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, Oxford University Press (2019); Jamie J. Hagen, “Queering Women, Peace and Security” (2016) 92 (2) International Affairs.

<sup>107</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021). Emphasis added.

<sup>108</sup> “Statement by Ms. Hilina Berhanu Degefa at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict” (13 April 2022) <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/statement-hilina-berhanu-degefa-council-open-debate-sexual-violence-in-conflict/>

<sup>109</sup> “Statement by Ms. Khin Ohmar at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict” (16 July 2020) <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/statement-unscc-svc-open-debate-july-2020/>

<sup>110</sup> Caitilin McMillan, Anna Tonelli, Kristina Mader, “Do our voices matter?: An analysis of women civil society representatives’ meaningful participation at the UN Security Council” (Joint Research Report, Oxfam, NGO Working Group on WPS) 2020 5. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621133/rr-women-civil-society-briefers-unscc-171220-sum-en.pdf?sequence=2>



# Maintaining Commitments

## Following up on recommendations by civil society briefers

Calls for the Security Council to do more to follow up on input by civil society briefers are not new. In his 2019 annual report on WPS, the Secretary-General had identified the tracking and regular follow-up of the implementation of recommendations made by civil society briefers among a range of actions Council members were encouraged to take immediately.<sup>111</sup> During the October 2021 WPS open debate, Celia Umenza Velasco, legal coordinator for the Indigenous Reservation of Tacueyó and member of the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of the North of Cauca (Colombia), urged the Council “to not allow this open debate to become yet another occasion where the Council listens to women civil society representatives but fails to act on our concerns”.<sup>112</sup>

The 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments identified two pledges specific to following up on civil society briefings at the Council. These are to:

- Draw attention to, and follow up on, the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers in Council meetings and other available opportunities.
- Share civil society statements and recommendations from previous meetings as a reminder to briefers, and request UN briefers to reflect on previous civil society recommendations to the Council.

It appears that most members that have signed up to the statement have not developed systematic processes to implement these two commitments since joining the Statement of Shared Commitments. Norway, on the other hand, apparently compiled recent civil society briefers’ statements relevant to the meetings expected in January 2022 and asked the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) to share these statements with expected UN briefers and ask them to highlight and reflect on what had been recommended by civil society briefers in previous meetings. It also seems that Norway regularly shared with Council members key points expected from each civil society briefer ahead of Council meetings during its presidency in order to encourage a more interactive discussion. One member suggested that in the future, the IEG co-chairs could informally circulate the statements delivered by civil society briefers to Council members.

111 Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2019/800) 122 (e). See also Caitilin McMillan, Anna Tonelli, Kristina Mader, “Do our voices matter?: An analysis of women civil society representatives’ meaningful participation at the UN Security Council” (Joint Research Report, Oxfam, NGO Working Group on WPS) 2020.

112 Women and peace and security (S/PV.8886).

113 There are, for instance, examples of Council members directly referencing remarks from civil society briefers in their statements during open meetings. At the January 2022 meeting on the situation in Libya, Ireland recalled the briefing that co-founder of Tamazight Women’s Movement Asma Khalifa gave to the Council at the September 2021 meeting on Libya, while also recalling concerns expressed by the civil society representative during the same meeting: “As Ms. Asma Khalifa told the Security Council in September 2021, and as we heard earlier once again from Ms. Saudi, Libyan women have been repeatedly failed by all actors in Libya. We should not accept the fact that only those who have not been in conflict get a chance to shape the peace.” The situation in Libya (S/PV.8952 and S/PV.8855). At the June 2022 meeting on Afghanistan, France and Ireland directly echoed the remarks by civil society representatives Yalda Royan and Yalda Hakim. France said: “As Ms. Hakim and Ms. Royan so eloquently described, their freedom has shrunk on a daily basis as they have become prisoners in their own country”. Ireland said: “As Ms. Royan asked, if women cannot travel freely, why should the Taliban be able to?”; “As Ms. Hakim told us today, women with steady determination act and protest, at real risk to themselves, their families and communities”. The situation in Afghanistan (S/PV.9075). At the October 2022 WPS open debate, Albania said that the Council “should follow up on recommendations and priority issues raised by civil-society briefers” and Norway recalled the briefing on Yemen by mediator Ola Al-Aghbary in January 2022. Ireland invited incoming Council members to build on the presidency trio initiative “and continue to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of women briefers” at the Security Council (S/PV.9158 and S/PV.8946).

114 See, for instance, the remarks by Executive Director of the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre Mahbouba Seraj at the January 2022 Council meeting on Afghanistan: “I am not the first, nor will I be the last Afghan woman to address the Council. But this time, I hope the international community will start to take us seriously”. At the June 2022 Council meeting on the same situation, civil society representative Yalda Royan said: “Afghan women warned the Security Council that the Taliban’s promises to respect women’s rights were not true. We were ignored, and now we are paying the price for the negligence of the international community, including everyone sitting at this table.” The situation in Afghanistan (S/PV.8954 and S/PV.9075). In their most recent letter to the Permanent Representatives of UN member states, the NGO Working Group on WPS calls on states to “[e]nsure women civil society representatives—including individuals representing diverse ability, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation and gender identity backgrounds and perspectives—continue to regularly brief the Security Council [...] that their independent selection and views are fully respected; and, most importantly, that their recommendations are acted upon”. NGO Working Group on WPS, “2022 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security” 3 October 2022 (emphasis added) [www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org](http://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org)

115 The situation in the Middle East (Yemen) (S/PV.9063).

116 Among other points, resolution 2624 also stresses the need for protecting women and girls in refugee camps, highlighting the importance of providing sex-separated facilities for women, such as latrines, and remedy and assistance for survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Security Council Report, 2022. “Yemen: Sanctions Resolution” (What’s in Blue) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/02/yemen-sanctions-resolution.php>

In their remarks during Council open meetings, members sometimes refer to or echo concerns and recommendations expressed by civil society representatives in briefings to the Council.<sup>113</sup> Although arguably to a lesser extent than many women civil society briefers may expect from their engagement with the Council,<sup>114</sup> some issues and concerns raised by civil society briefers appear to have been taken up by Council members during negotiations and were sometimes incorporated into Council outcomes. It remains difficult, however, to pinpoint exactly how far members take up, and attempt to incorporate in Council outcomes, issues raised by civil society representatives specifically in order to follow up on them. It is likely that key issues, including those relating to WPS, are taken up as a result of multiple factors, including the convergence of interests and priorities between civil society advocates and Council members. But there is some evidence that issues raised by civil society are sometimes reflected in Council outcomes and taken up during negotiations.

At the June 2022 Council meeting on Yemen, Azal Al-Salafi, Protection and Advocacy Officer at Peace Track Initiative, thanked the Council for taking into account the recommendations emerging from the feminist road map for peace “on inclusion and multi-track design and reflecting them in its adoption in February of resolution 2624, which eventually materialized in the design of the recent United Nations-led peace consultations and in the outcomes of the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] intra-Yemeni talks”.<sup>115</sup> Resolution 2624, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime, features new language calling on “all the stakeholders and all the varied and multiple parties, including [...] the Government of Yemen and the Houthis”, to engage constructively with Special Envoy Hans Grundberg in his “ongoing framework consultations as well as broader peace efforts”. It further highlights the need for “a political process that includes and meets the legitimate aspirations of all Yemen’s multiple and varied parties”. New language was also apparently introduced by the penholder (UK) and Ireland, demanding the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the peace process.<sup>116</sup>

One of the members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative reported having explicitly highlighted the analysis and recommendations of civil society briefers during negotiations and having suggested language based on what civil society had called for in

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several Council outcomes. This member nevertheless admitted that, because of the negotiations' dynamics, the final compromise might not be immediately recognisable to the briefer.

During her briefing at the January 2022 open debate on protecting participation, Director of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation Zarqa Yaftali raised "women's rights, including the right of women's human rights defenders to operate freely without fear of reprisal", and stressed the importance of UNAMA continuing to monitor the human rights situation as part of its renewed mandate.<sup>117</sup> She also called for "ensur[ing] that education also falls under the new UNAMA mandate".<sup>118</sup> These issues appear in resolution 2626 which extended UNAMA's mandate until 17 March 2023 and included among the priorities for the mission's mandate:

- human rights monitoring and reporting;
- supporting and promoting gender equality, the full protection of women and girls' human rights, including education, and the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation, engagement and leadership of women in all levels of decision-making;
- engaging "with diverse Afghan women's organizations and networks"; and
- monitoring and reporting "specifically on violations, abuses and reprisals committed against women, including against those who protect and promote human rights, journalists, health-care and humanitarian workers, as well as those previously associated with the government, police, justice and security sector".

Members have recognised the role played by Afghan women leaders' advocacy around UNAMA's mandate renewal in March 2022 as making a difference in securing a stronger mandate from the Council. Speaking to *The Guardian* about the advocacy work of a core group of Afghan women leaders, a UN Women official said that there were "concerns that the mandate would regress in terms of gender equality and human rights, and that this would be reflected in the budget. But the mandate remained intact, and central member states actually reached out to me and said that the advocacy by these women really made a difference in those negotiations".<sup>119</sup> One member argued that, although most Council members would probably have understood the relevance of WPS concerns for the situation in Afghanistan even in the absence of sustained civil society advocacy, advocacy was essential for members to understand "what exactly needed to happen" with the UNAMA mandate.

While the Statement of Shared Commitments does not define what members meant by "following up" on issues raised by civil society briefers, follow-up measures are arguably not limited to seeking to incorporate key issues highlighted by civil society briefers in formal outcomes and remarks. For instance, once these issues are reflected in formal outcomes, "follow up" may require members to pursue their implementation. In this regard, Zahra Nader, Editor-in-Chief of *Zan Times* (a women-led newsroom covering human rights violations in Afghanistan), who briefed the Council at the October

2022 annual open debate, called on the Council to "hold UNAMA accountable for women's rights throughout its work".<sup>120</sup>

Some members also organised informal meetings with women civil society representatives to provide them with further platforms to share their messages and to facilitate enhanced interaction with Council members. For instance, Ireland meets with a core group of Afghan women leaders roughly once per month.<sup>121</sup> Norway supported an expert consultation with civil society representatives organised by UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the NGO Working Group on WPS in January 2022 on the issue of reprisals against women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries, including as a result of cooperation with the UN. The expert consultation resulted in a summary report containing a list of recommendations and key messages for Council members, UN member states and the UN system.<sup>122</sup> France and Norway co-hosted an informal discussion at the level of Deputy Permanent Representatives with Afghan women leaders ahead of the Council meeting on Afghanistan in September 2022.

Systematic research is needed to understand the extent to which Council members follow up on the priority issues and recommendations of civil society briefers, the trade-off between competing asks and policy priorities, and which issues and recommendations are most likely (or least likely) to be taken up by Council members. Research will also need to try to reflect the fact that similar messages are often put to Council members by several actors, including civil society groups and the UN system, such as through the IEG. It is arguably these actors' combined activities that may result in follow-up by interested members. At the same time, while the commitments pledge members to follow up on key issues and recommendations by civil society, it would be interesting to study how members respond when civil society groups bring diverging requests to Council members. Importantly, any analysis of follow-up on civil society briefings should be guided by the views of the briefers invited by Council presidencies and should ideally be accompanied by a study of excluded voices.

### Safe participation of civil society briefers

When NGO Working Group on WPS Executive Director Kaavya Asoka briefed the Council at the January 2022 open debate on "Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes", she said that approximately one-third of the women supported by the NGO Working Group on WPS who have briefed the Council since 2018 had faced intimidation or reprisals and that, in about 67 percent of those cases, state actors were the perpetrators.<sup>123</sup> More recently, the Secretary-General's annual report on cooperation with the UN in the field of human rights, which was issued in September 2022, said that women human rights defenders and peacebuilders "face daunting risks when they engage with the [UN], in particular with the Security Council and with its peace

117 Women and peace and security (S/PV.8949).

118 Ibid.

119 Rosie Swash and Ruchi Kumar, "The Taliban don't know how to govern: the Afghan women shaping global policy from exile" (*The Guardian*, 25 August 2022) <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/25/afghan-women-exile-taliban-global-policy>

120 Women and peace and security (S/PV.9158).

121 Rosie Swash and Ruchi Kumar, "The Taliban don't know how to govern: the Afghan women shaping global policy from exile" (*The Guardian*, 25 August 2022).

122 Letter dated 12 October 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/756).

123 "Statement by Kaavya Asoka at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security" (18 January 2022) <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/statement-uns-cwps-open-debate-january-2022/>

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operations”.<sup>124</sup> According to the Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS, which was issued on 5 October 2022, nine out of 32 women civil society representatives who briefed the Security Council from January 2021 to May 2022 and responded to a UN Women survey, reported having faced reprisals.<sup>125</sup>

The 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments includes a specific pledge on “[s]upporting the safe participation of civil society briefers in Security Council meetings, including by consulting and coordinating with the briefer in question to assess risks and develop appropriate risk mitigation strategies, and also committing to a zero-tolerance approach to reprisals against the briefer and calling for accountability for such acts”.<sup>126</sup>

The majority of Council members mentioned the issue of reprisals in their remarks during the January 2022 open debate on protecting participation, with Albania, Norway and the UAE also referring to a zero-tolerance approach as stated in the text of the Statement of Shared Commitments. Mexico called on the Council “to speak out when it becomes aware of those situations, and thereby send an unequivocal message of rejection”.<sup>127</sup> Ireland said that the “Council must reject any and all reprisals against briefers and ensure that it provides a safe platform in the Chamber”.<sup>128</sup> High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, who briefed during the open debate, said that more needs to be done “to provide safe spaces for women human rights defenders to interact with the Council and its subsidiary bodies, without fear of retribution” but was also encouraged by the efforts of some states “to mitigate reprisals against women peacebuilders who engage with the Council, including tailored contingency plans in coordination with [UN] peace operations”.<sup>129</sup> As part of its commitment to preventing and responding to reprisals, the UK mentioned funding OHCHR to, among other things, “develop guidance to prevent reprisals against civil society briefers to the Council”.<sup>130</sup> It seems that this includes a set of good practice guidelines on the safe and meaningful participation of civil society members developed in 2021 by OHCHR at the request of some Council members.

In practice, specific compliance with commitments in this area remains difficult to ascertain and is largely dependent on members’ self-reporting. It seems, however, that several members who participated in the WPS presidencies initiative have put in place varying levels of measures to mitigate and respond to the risk of reprisals against civil society briefers. At the same time, it appears that some members believe that they would benefit from additional support from OHCHR in operationalising emergency measures in cases where the concrete risk of reprisals emerges and other support networks are unavailable to these members.

Members participating in the WPS presidency initiative reported having put in place some or all of the following measures to mitigate and respond to the risk of reprisals:

- following the OHCHR guidelines
- designating reprisals focal point(s) or networks in their Permanent Missions in New York
- briefing Mission colleagues on the risk of reprisals and circulating the OHCHR guidelines internally
- liaising with their own embassies and capital-based desks, OHCHR, field-based UN offices, and the briefers themselves to assess risks and developing mitigation plans ahead of the briefing
- following up with the briefer at several time intervals after their briefing
- enacting emergency measures when needed
- exchanging advice, experiences and good practices with other members at the start/end of Council terms.

It seems that Albania not only designated a mission-level focal point on reprisals but also established an internal chain of command on reprisals which included file experts, the reprisal focal point and a senior diplomat to be able to rapidly discuss and clear decisions on possible situations of reprisals at any time. One member said that developing processes for the safe participation of civil society briefers in Council meetings had the effect of increasing internal awareness of the need to consider similar measures for less high-profile meetings, such as side events.

At the same time, there is clear evidence that more needs to be done. For instance, the 2022 Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS says that risk assessments and protection planning were not undertaken for all of the women civil society representatives who briefed the Security Council from January 2021 to May 2022 and responded to the above-mentioned UN Women survey, and in many cases risk assessments and protection planning were conducted by civil society instead of the UN or the inviting Council member.<sup>131</sup> The report further notes that “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”.<sup>132</sup>

### Requesting a gender analysis by UN briefers

According to the 2022 Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS, UN reporting on WPS issues has improved markedly in recent years.<sup>133</sup> However, briefings to the Security Council by UN briefers have not consistently reflected this improvement. It appears that only some members adopted a systematic approach to the commitment to request a gender analysis from UN briefers and, accordingly, asked UN briefers to provide this. For instance, it seems that Ireland consistently met at Permanent Representative level with Secretariat briefers ahead of their briefing at country-specific Council meetings to stress the importance of including a gender analysis in their remarks. This request was also seemingly

<sup>124</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (A/HRC/51/47) 124. See also “Report details disturbing trends as reprisals continue against people cooperating with the UN” (29 September 2022) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/report-details-disturbing-trends-reprisals-continue-against-people>

<sup>125</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2022/740).

<sup>126</sup> Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

<sup>127</sup> Women and peace and security (S/PV.8949).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2022/740).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. For instance, the Secretary-General’s report says that more than 90 percent of UN reports in 2021 contained WPS-specific recommendations.



## Maintaining Commitments

conveyed in the invitation letters issued to the briefers. It appears that Norway included in its working methods a request that SCAD ask all UN briefers to include a gender analysis in their briefings as a cross-cutting theme. Norway's practice of collecting previous statements by civil society briefers and sending them to UN briefers through SCAD ahead of their briefings to the Council, as described above, can also be seen as a way to prompt a discussion of key issues. It seems that during its March 2022 presidency, the UAE consistently contacted the expected briefers to ask if they could incorporate a focus on one or more of the key themes of WPS, climate, or youth in their statements, as appropriate.

Some members participating in the initiative have also requested the inclusion of a gender analysis during open meetings. For instance, during the 9 February 2022 briefing on the Secretary-General's 14th biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Mexico regretted that the report failed to include an analysis of masculinities,<sup>134</sup> which Mexico had requested in a previous meeting,<sup>135</sup> and asked again that it be included in the next report.<sup>136</sup> (On 28 July 2021, Mexico organised an Arria-formula meeting on counter-terrorism and gender which discussed how a focus on masculinities and gender inequality can better support a comprehensive gender approach by the Security Council when considering the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism.)

At the 29 June 2022 meeting on the political track in Syria, Ireland asked for an update on UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen's engagement with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board. (Incidentally, this may also be read as implementing the commitment on calling on the UN to ensure women's participation in peace processes it leads or co-leads, especially given that Ireland concomitantly stressed that "[w]omen from all parts of Syria's society must be empowered to fully and equally participate in the political track, including through, but not limited to, the Syrian Women's Advisory Board".<sup>137</sup>) During the 27 June 2022 meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", Ireland referred to the 24 June 2022 IEG meeting on the same situation and encouraged more regular

reporting by Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland "on the engagement and participation of women in peace and security in the region".<sup>138</sup> In particular, Ireland requested "a systematic analysis of the implications of the conflict, particularly the occupation, for women and girls".<sup>139</sup> It seems, too, that several members called for the inclusion of more substantive gender analysis in UN reports to the Council during the 24 June 2022 IEG meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question".<sup>140</sup> (This was the first IEG meeting on this situation.)

Of the three public requests mentioned above,<sup>141</sup> reporting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" has not shown improvement on integrating a gender analysis since the requests by Ireland and other IEG members. On the other hand, Council members received updates on the UN's engagement with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board in August, September and October 2022.<sup>142</sup> The Secretary-General's 15th biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which was issued on 26 July 2022, included relevant language on masculinities, recognising that "[u]nderstanding power structures and gendered practices in society, including the role of masculinities in terrorist groups and how terrorist groups and networks interact with societies, is indispensable to ensure effective approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism".<sup>143</sup> According to Mexico's remarks at the 9 August 2022 Council briefing on the Secretary-General's report, this was the first time the report incorporated "a reference to the role played by masculinities in terrorist groups".<sup>144</sup> Mexico expressed hope that this might lead to further work on this issue by both the Council and the General Assembly to achieve "a more robust preventive agenda that results in a truly cross-cutting gender policy, and which has at its core the protection of human rights as a fundamental part of the fight against terrorism".<sup>145</sup> An avenue for future research would be to systematically investigate whether bilateral and public requests to include a gender analysis in briefings by the UN have led to a more systematic and substantive incorporation of a gender analysis in briefings by UN personnel.

134 Masculinity refers to "the roles, behaviours and attributes that are considered appropriate for boys and men in a given society. Masculinity is constructed and defined socially, historically and politically, rather than being biologically driven". Notably, "there is no single, fixed definition of masculinity. There are many socially constructed definitions for being a man, and these can change over time and from place to place". From Dean Peacock et al, "A WILPF Research Guide: Confronting Militarised Masculinities, Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace" (2022) 15, 16 [https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/RL\\_07\\_Confronting-Militarised-Masculinities-Mobilising-Vis2.pdf](https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/RL_07_Confronting-Militarised-Masculinities-Mobilising-Vis2.pdf); see also Hannah Wright, "Masculinities perspectives: advancing a radical Women, Peace and Security agenda?" (2020) 22 (5) International Feminist Journal of Politics <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2019.1667849>

135 Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/PV.8839).

136 Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/PV.8963).

137 The situation in the Middle East (S/PV.9083).

138 The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.9077). Highlighting the IEG's work is one of the WPS shared commitments.

139 Ibid.

140 Letter dated 6 July 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/557).

141 Another interesting example was during the 11 May 2022 open briefing on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when Ireland reiterated previous requests to High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Christian Schmidt "to focus on the issue of gender equality and for reporting on the issue to be included in future reports of the Office of the High Representative". In response, Schmidt said that he had included "an observation about the role of women in politics and society" in his next report (S/PV.9029). To note, the High Representative is not an official of the UN. However, according to Security Council resolution 1031 (1995), the Secretary-General submits reports to the Council from the High Representative. The Council meets twice per year to discuss these reports.

142 The situation in the Middle East (S/PV.9117; S/PV.9130 and S/PV.9163).

143 Fifteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2022/576). The Secretary-General's report also refers to the following joint report: Aleksandra Dier and Gretchen Baldwin, "Masculinities and Violent Extremism", International Peace Institute and UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (June 2022). <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Masculinities-and-VE-Web.pdf>

144 Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/PV.9108).

145 Ibid.

## Recommendations and Future Options

Council dynamics on WPS remain difficult and have been further complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rather than pursuing new thematic Council outcomes on WPS, supportive members and civil society actors emphasise the importance of implementing the existing normative framework. In conversations with WPS experts working in and around the Council, the current period is sometimes described as one in which the agenda is in “defensive mode” and one where key actors need to remain alert, as “any of the agenda's gains is reversible”.

Against this backdrop, the WPS presidencies initiative conferred heightened visibility to the agenda at the Council, showing that creative and informal initiatives can help in moving the focus from advancing the agenda through new resolutions to creating momentum around its implementation. The presidencies initiative represented the first time that a fairly broad list of WPS-focused commitments has been undertaken across multiple and sometimes consecutive Council presidencies. Often after overcoming opposition, members strengthened WPS language in several Council products, and some members invited an exceptional number of women civil society representatives to brief the Council. The current year (2022) has seen the highest number of Council meetings on WPS since the inception of the agenda in 2000, including the first-ever formal Council meeting on reprisals against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives. Dedicated press stakeouts have allowed the increasingly large group of cross-regional members participating in the initiative to highlight WPS issues and asks.

During some months, however, the golden thread of WPS was barely discernible among other priorities and the Council's regular reporting and mandate cycle. As discussed in this report, most of the commitments can be directly traced back to actions all UN members are already supposed to carry out in accordance with Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2242 through which the Council decided “to integrate [WPS] concerns across all country-specific situations” on its agenda. At the same time, the report has shown that fulfilment of the commitments has thus far been uneven across participating members, with proactive and substantive action on some of the commitments remaining low.

More meetings with a focus on WPS-related issues and more women civil society briefers do not, of themselves, translate into implementation or meaningful change, as civil society groups that monitor the Council's implementation of the agenda are particularly aware. Indeed, the 2022 NGO Working Group on WPS open letter to UN Permanent Representatives providing recommendations ahead of the October annual WPS open debate urged states “not to mistake process for progress, or rhetoric for action”, adding that “[i]t is not enough to pledge commitment to the WPS agenda without delivering meaningful change for all women and girls living through the daily realities of war”.<sup>146</sup>

Several of the members that were behind the initial momentum of the initiative will end their Council term in December 2022, including trio members Ireland, Kenya and Mexico, as well as Norway. While the evolution of the presidency initiative in 2023 is yet unknown, in October 2022 incoming members Ecuador, Malta and Switzerland endorsed the Statement of Shared Commitments. More members may join in future.

Council members could enhance cross-presidency planning to promote robust and continuous engagement on WPS across the Council's work. This could include strategically planning activities such as Council meetings and stakeouts to maximise their impact, focusing on situations which have not received adequate Council attention, capitalising on the expertise and recommendations shared during IEG meetings, and coordinating positions on key WPS objectives in, for instance, mandate renewals. While strengthening cross-presidency planning and coordinating positions on WPS is likely to help enhance the impact of the initiative, it may also test how far members can find common ground on WPS issues while having different national priorities on the various country files on the Council's agenda.

In line with resolution 2242 and the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments, members should continue to invite diverse women civil society representatives to regularly brief the Council and follow up on their information and recommendations. Members may also wish to develop ways to monitor the impact of their commitment to follow up on civil society briefers' recommendations. Planning well in advance of the start of a Council presidency may help members in fulfilling their commitment to “[e]nsuring [a] strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers”<sup>147</sup> and in evaluating risks and developing appropriate risk-mitigation strategies; this would include working with civil society organisations, the UN system and coordinating with like-minded members.

It is essential that members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the breifier, including carrying out risk assessment, developing protection plans and responding to any reprisals. Members should condemn all attacks against civil society briefers and ensure that the UN has sufficient capacity to work on reprisals. All members may also consider making funding available for women's rights organisations, including those working to protect human rights defenders.

Resolution 2122 requested senior UN officials briefing the Council to provide updates on issues relevant to WPS, including implementation. All members may want to consider asking UN briefers to provide substantive updates to the Council on issues relevant to the WPS agenda. This can be done bilaterally, but also during open meetings, particularly where the presentation of gender elements is insufficient or absent altogether.

Members may want to focus their WPS press stakeouts to highlight clear and specific messages and better integrate “substantive gender perspectives” in their non-WPS-focused signature events.<sup>148</sup>

One member suggested that there be regular informal meetings with current and former participants to touch base on the implementation and evolution of the initiative. Current participating members could also regularly update the Group of Friends of WPS—an informal network of 64 UN member states chaired by Canada—on the evolution of the WPS presidencies initiative.<sup>149</sup>

Ultimately, maintaining the momentum and the clear and substantive implementation of the shared commitments across participating members will be crucial for the legacy of this initiative and for its credibility as a tool to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda “in concrete and tangible ways”.<sup>150</sup>

146 NGO Working Group on WPS, “2022 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security”, 3 October 2022 [www.womenpeacesecurity.org](https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org)

147 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

148 Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August and 1 December 2021).

149 Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Ukraine, UAE, UK, Uruguay, US, and Zambia. See “Statement on behalf of 64 Member States of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security” at the annual open debate on WPS (20 October 2022) [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/un-onu/statements-declarations/2022-10-28-women-64-femmes.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/un-onu/statements-declarations/2022-10-28-women-64-femmes.aspx?lang=eng)

150 Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

## Annex I: Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021)

### A Security Council Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security<sup>151</sup> Ireland, Kenya and Mexico September, October and November 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments

Ireland, Kenya and Mexico are committed to making Women, Peace and Security a top priority, in concrete and tangible ways, during our respective presidencies of the Security Council during September, October and November 2021. We are determined to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda and to help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality that has hampered the realisation of its full potential, especially on the ground.

We believe in the transformative power of the WPS agenda to enable the Security Council to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Women and girls have the right to participate fully, equally and meaningfully in matters of peace and security and to protection in situations of armed conflict, including from sexual and gender-based violence, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Ireland and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, will continue to maximise the contribution of that group to the work of the Council and all its bodies. Kenya will also further advance this effort as host of October's Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security during its presidency.

Our shared goal is to ensure that WPS is integrated fully into country-specific and other discussions on the Council's agenda and receives the attention it merits.

To that end, and to drive forward implementation of the

WPS normative framework, we commit to:

- Gender balance, striving towards gender parity, among those we invite to brief the Security Council.
- Strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers in Security Council meetings.
- Making WPS an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council over the three months.
- Requesting the inclusion of gender analysis in briefings by the UN to the Council.
- Heightening the visibility of our discussions on WPS by holding WPS press 'stakeouts'.
- Ensuring that Security Council products we draft integrate strong WPS language.
- Ensuring that signature events we host include substantive gender perspectives.
- Preparing a handover and summary at the conclusion of our presidencies with best practice recommendations on WPS, including from civil society, for future Security Council presidencies.
- Marking the opening and closing months of the Trio with PR level meetings on WPS hosted by the IEG co-chairs, Ireland and Mexico, to complement the annual debate hosted by Kenya.
- Highlighting the positive impact of the IEG on WPS five years after its creation and the need to strengthen synergies with other mechanisms aimed at advancing the WPS Agenda.
- Reflecting WPS highlights and recommendations in our end-of-presidency wrap sessions.
- Advancing the objective of the Arria-formula meeting of 8 March 2021 calling for the UN to lead by example in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes it leads or co-leads.

<sup>151</sup> <https://dfa.ie/media/missions/pmunnnewyork/wps/2021-WPS-Presidency-Trio-Statement-of-Shared-Commitments.pdf>



## Annex II: Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021)

### Statement of Shared Commitments<sup>152</sup>

Niger, Norway, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Malta, and Switzerland during our respective Presidencies of the Security Council in December 2021, January, March, April, June, July, September, and October 2022, and February, May, June, July, September, October, and December 2023 are committed to making Women, Peace and Security a top priority, and to ensuring its implementation in concrete and tangible ways. These commitments build on the initiative launched in September 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico.

We believe in the transformative power of the WPS agenda to enable the Security Council to fully realise its mandate to maintain international peace and security. We are determined to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda, and ensure the Council approaches WPS in a systematic way to help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality, especially on the ground.

Women and girls have the right to participate fully, equally and meaningfully in all matters of peace and security, including conflict prevention, and to protection in situations of armed conflict, including from sexual and gender-based violence, in accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Our shared goal is to ensure that the WPS agenda is fully and meaningfully integrated into all aspects of the Council's work, including in country-specific discussions, and that the crucial work of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace is supported and recognised.

#### *To drive forward implementation of the WPS normative framework, we commit to:*

Women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in Council meetings:

- Promoting gender balance and striving towards gender parity, among those we invite to brief the Security Council.
- Ensuring strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers in Security Council meetings.
- Supporting the safe participation of civil society briefers in Security Council meetings, including by consulting and coordinating with the briefers in question to assess risks and

develop appropriate risk mitigation strategies, and also committing to a zero-tolerance approach to reprisals against the briefers and calling for accountability for such acts.

- Drawing attention to, and following up on, the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers in Council meetings and other available opportunities.

#### *Including gender perspectives in Council meetings and products:*

- Requesting the inclusion of gender analysis as a cross-cutting theme in United Nations (UN) briefings to the Council.
- Sharing civil society statements and recommendations from previous meetings as a reminder to briefers, and requesting UN briefers to reflect on previous civil society recommendations to the Council.
- Making WPS-related issues an explicit focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council or specifically host a WPS signature event in each Presidency and requesting UN briefers to focus on this aspect.
- Ensuring that Security Council products integrate strong WPS language, taking into consideration the recommendations from the Reports of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and the recommendations from Informal Expert Group on WPS.
- Including substantive gender perspectives in the signature events of our presidencies.
- Highlighting the work and recommendations of the Informal Expert Group on WPS and coordinating with the IEG and relevant UN Groups of Friends to ensure information sharing.

#### *Transparency in advancing the WPS agenda in the Council:*

- Upholding the provisions of all previous Security Council Resolutions pertaining to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and advocating for their full implementation.
- Highlighting and advancing key WPS issues in our statements, and heightening the visibility of our discussions on WPS, including by holding WPS press 'stakeouts'
- Reflecting WPS highlights and recommendations in our end-of-presidency wrap-up sessions.
- Calling for the UN to lead by example in ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peace processes it leads or co-leads

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.norway.no/contentassets/1b036f2777f74bd3b8ff473555c63a98/statement-of-shared-commitments-2022.pdf>

## Annex III: Key UN Documents on Women, Peace and Security

### SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

[S/RES/2493](#) (29 October 2019) reiterated the need for the full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

[S/RES/2467](#) (23 April 2019) recognised the need for a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. This resolution passed with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia).

[S/RES/2242](#) (13 October 2015) expressed the Council's intention to convene an Informal Experts Group (IEG) on women, peace and security and to invite women civil society briefers to country-specific and thematic meetings of the Security Council. It also called for greater integration of the agendas on WPS and counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.

[S/RES/2122](#) (18 October 2013) recognised the need for information and analysis on the impact of conflict on women and girls, women's role in peacebuilding and the gender dimensions of peace processes and requested UN senior officials to update the Council on issues relevant to women, peace and security as part of their regular briefings.

[S/RES/2106](#) (24 June 2013) focused on sexual violence in conflict, including the need for accountability.

[S/RES/1960](#) (16 December 2010) requested the Secretary-General to add an annex to the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence listing conflict parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

[S/RES/1889](#) (5 October 2009) urged UN member states, international and regional organisations to take measures to improve women's participation during all stages of peace processes, including by enhancing their engagement in political and economic decision-making in the early stages of recovery processes.

[S/RES/1888](#) (30 September 2009) focused on sexual violence in conflict situations and established the position of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

[S/RES/1820](#) (19 June 2008) focused on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, including by expressing the Council's intention to consider the use of targeted sanctions against perpetrators.

[S/RES/1325](#) (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on women, peace and security. Reaffirming women's key role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, this text calls for the adoption of a gender perspective in peace agreements and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence.

### SELECTED SECURITY COUNCIL LETTERS

[S/2022/756](#) (13 October 2022) was a letter from Norway containing the summary report of a consultation with civil society on women human rights defenders in conflict organised and facilitated by UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

[S/2022/557](#) (6 July 2022) was a letter from Ireland, Mexico and the UK containing the summary of the IEG's 24 June 2022 meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question".

[S/2022/171](#) (1 March 2022) was a letter from Ireland, Mexico and the UK containing the summary of the IEG's 18 February 2021 meeting on Afghanistan.

[S/2022/91](#) (3 February 2022) was a letter from Ireland, Kenya and Mexico containing a handover and summary report on the presidency trio initiative.

[S/2021/668](#) (17 August 2021) was a letter from Ireland, Mexico and the UK containing the summary of the IEG's 30 June 2021 meeting on Somalia.

[S/2020/1054](#) (30 October 2020) was a draft resolution on women, peace and security initiated by Russia, which failed to garner the needed amount of votes to pass.

### SELECTED SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING RECORDS

[S/PV.9158](#) (20 October 2022) was the 2022 annual open debate on women, peace and security.

[S/PV.9137](#) (27 September 2022) was a Council briefing on Afghanistan.

[S/PV.9064](#) (15 June 2022) was an open debate on the role of regional organisations in implementing the women, peace and security agenda in contexts of political turmoil and seizures of power by force.

[S/PV.9016](#) (13 April 2022) was the 2022 annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence.

[S/PV.8989](#) (8 March 2022) was an open debate on public-private partnerships, women's economic inclusion and participation.

[S/PV.8949](#) (18 January 2022) was an open debate on reprisals against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives.

[S/PV.8946](#) (12 January 2022) was a Council briefing on the situation in Yemen with a particular focus on women, peace and security.

[S/PV.8901](#) (10 November 2021) was the annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations, which had a particular focus on women, peace and security.

[S/PV.8886](#) (21 October 2021) was the 2021 annual open debate on women, peace and security.

[S/PV.8867](#) (28 September 2021) was a Council briefing on the situation in Somalia with a particular focus on women, peace and security.

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## Photo Credits

Geraldine Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of September, chairs the Security Council meeting on the situation in Libya.

Photo Credits: [UN Photo/Cia Pak](#)

Martin Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of October, chairs the Security Council meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic.

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Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of November, chairs the Security Council meeting on peace and security in Africa.

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Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of December, chairs the Security Council meeting on threats to international peace and security.

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Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of January, chairs the Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East (Syria).

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Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of United Arab Emirates to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of March, chairs the Security Council meeting on threats to international peace and security.

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Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of April, chairs the emergency Security Council meeting on the situation in Yemen.

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Ferit Hoxha, Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of June, chairs the Security Council meeting on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

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Ronaldo Costa Filho (left), Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of July, chairs the Security Council meeting on the situation in Cyprus.

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Nicolas de Rivière, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of September, chairs the Security Council meeting on maintenance of international peace and security (Libya).

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