

## Beyond Victimhood: Engaging Women in the Pursuit of Peace

Testimony to the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

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Mr. Chairman. It is a great honor to testify before this Committee on the topic of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In three decades of public service in the State Department, National Security Council, and House Majority Leader's Office, and now as Deputy President of International Crisis Group, I have focused much of my attention on the involving women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction.

### Women's Participation Key to Success

Frequently, it is said that engaging women in these processes is a matter of justice and fairness. Women should be there because they make up half the population, or because women are the main victims of conflict, or because women are inherently more peaceful and collaborative and less corrupt. For me, the real question is that of effectiveness: put simply, peace processes and peace building are more likely to succeed if women are engaged as planners, implementers and beneficiaries.

This is the guiding concept behind Resolution 1325, which provides guidance for the UN staff and its member states on how to engage and protect women in the processes of ending armed conflict. Resolution 1325 is, in effect, a game plan for ensuring gender equality in political leadership, building gender-sensitive security forces, supporting women as they return to their homes, ensuring safety for women in refugee camps and settlements, and insisting on accountability for sexual violence and other abuses.

For me, this resolution was long-overdue, and it is deeply personal.

### The Cautionary Tale of Angola

In 1994, while serving as President Clinton's NSC senior director for Africa, I supported negotiations to end decades of civil war in Angola that had killed a half million people and left three million people homeless. When the peace accord was signed in November 1994, I gave a speech where I boasted that not a single provision in the agreement discriminated against women. "The agreement is gender-neutral," I proclaimed proudly.

President Clinton then named me as US ambassador to Angola and a member of the Peace Commission implementing the peace accords. It took me only a few weeks after my arrival in Luanda to realize that a peace agreement that is "gender-neutral" is, by definition, discriminatory against women.

Consider the evidence. First, the agreement did not require the participation of women in the Peace Commission itself and as a result, there were 40 men on this Commission and no women. This imbalance silenced women's voices on the issues of internal displacement, trafficking in women and girls, sexual violence, abuses by security forces, and the rebuilding of maternal health care and girls' education were generally ignored.

Second, the peace accord was based on 13 separate amnesties that forgave the parties for atrocities committed during the conflict. Given the prominence of sexual abuse during the conflict, including rape as a weapon of war, amnesties meant that men with guns forgave other men with guns for crimes committed against women. These amnesties also introduced a cynicism that undercut our efforts to rebuild the justice and security sectors.

Third, male ex-combatants received a little money and demobilization kits, and were sent back to communities that had learned to live without them during decades of conflict. The frustration of these men exploded into an epidemic of alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce, rape, and domestic violence. In effect, the end of civil war unleashed a new era of violence against women.

Even such well-intentioned efforts as clearing major roads of landmines to allow three million refugees and IDPs to return to their homes backfired against women. Road clearance generally preceded the demining of fields, wells, and forests. As newly resettled women went out to plant the fields, fetch water, and collect firewood, they faced a new rash of landmine accidents.

We recognized these problems, and responded by bringing out gender advisers and human rights officers; launching programs in maternal health care, girls' education, micro-enterprise, and support for women's NGOs; and insisting that women be planners, implementers and beneficiaries for our humanitarian and reconstruction programs.

But most of this was done on an ad hoc basis, and there was a "too-little, too-late" quality about it. And thus I was so pleased when UNSC Resolution 1325 was adopted.

### Resolution 1325: A Dream Deferred

But thus far, the promise of this resolution has been a dream deferred, in large part because there are no monitoring, accountability, and enforcement mechanisms. Women continue to be raped and trafficked with impunity, both by rebel movements and by the very Government security forces charged with protecting them – including in the eastern Congo despite the presence of 17,000 UN peacekeeping troops in that country.

Courageous and talented women peacebuilders face discrimination in legal, cultural and traditional practices. Sexual violence and threats against women in power impose a stigma of victimization and a real danger that makes even the most impressive and courageous women think twice before stepping forward. Men leading peace conferences still exclude women or shunt them off to ante-rooms while "real" negotiations take place.

### Nine Steps to Engagement

Many steps are required to change this situation, but let me just make eight tangible proposals.

1. The United States should insist that the mandate for every UN peacekeeping mission includes as a priority the protection of women and the safeguarding of women peace builders, including through the provision of personal security and training.
2. Heads of UN missions in countries facing conflict must insist that a critical mass of qualified women – beginning at 20 percent – are included peace talks, reconstruction conferences, and governance mechanisms, even if it takes quotas to do so.
3. The U.S. should prioritize in post-conflict reconstruction and donors conferences the rebuilding of social structures of particular importance to women, such as reproductive health care and girls' education, and all plans should be subjected to gender-impact analysis.
4. While there is a need for both reconciliation and forgiveness following conflict, amnesty should never be provided to individuals who have used rape as a weapon of war.
5. U.S. support for the rebuilding and reform of armies, police, and other security forces should insist on training in gender issues for new and existing forces and require the incorporation of women into those forces, in particular so that local women who have been abused will come forward with their accusations.

6. Personal accountability and measurement mechanisms should be developed to insist on compliance with UNSC Resolution 1325, so that individuals within the UN system know that their career advancement depends on taking these provisions seriously.

7. A formal working group of the UN Security Council should be created and mandated to implement UNSC Resolution 1325, including possible “naming and shaming” and adoption of sanctions against countries and individuals who are patent abusers.

8. The UN must upgrade the role of gender advisers in its missions and expand the number of women serving as UN special representatives to countries in conflict. This effort should be supported by programs to more effectively recruit women into the UN system at all levels, and to promote their success through training and mentorship.

9. Finally, the United States should lead by example, ensuring that all its diplomatic and military personnel are familiar with and committed to the provisions of UNSC Resolution 1325, and have the resources needed to ensure its implementation.

#### The “Hard” Road Ahead

Mr. Chairman. Fundamental to these solutions is a change in mindset, one that goes beyond viewing women solely as victims, and viewing the protection of women as the “soft side” of peace-building. Let me assure you there is nothing “soft” about going after traffickers who turn women and girls into commodities. There is nothing “soft” about preventing armed thugs from abusing women in IDP camps, holding warlords accountable for crimes committed against women, forcing demobilized soldiers to refrain from domestic violence, or insisting on a seat at the table for women in peace negotiations and post-conflict governments.

These are among the hardest responsibilities in our peace building agenda, and I commend this Committee for shining a spotlight on them in this hearing today. Thank you.