



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE ON THE FORMULATION OF THE U.S. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON UN SCR 1325

Between 23 September and 22 October 2011, the U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) held five civil society consultations with the Department of State, Office of Women's Global Issues, on the formulation of the U.S. National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, due to be finalized in December 2011. **The consultations were held in Detroit, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; San Diego, California; Portland, Oregon; and Boston, Massachusetts.** As the U.S. government had not completed a draft NAP, the consultations depended upon an oral briefing without specific details as to accountabilities, timelines, benchmarks or indicators. Consultations validated the stated goal of the U.S. 1325 NAP to make "women equal partners in peace" while also stressing the centrality of both external and domestic applications to achieve this aim. Participants worked in round-tables and presented testimony and recommendations to strengthening the NAP. What follows are **partial and preliminary findings** of the consultations, with a full report to be released by U.S. WILPF in November 2011.

1. ***A whole government process.*** The current interagency taskforce—comprised of the White House, National Security Council, Department of State, Department of Defense and USAID—is formulating the NAP. The NAP development could be broadened to a whole government process to fully respond to the myriad and complex way women experience war and insecurity globally and domestically. ***Participants suggested broader involvement of governmental agencies in the process going forward. In addition to the current agencies, the NAP formulation should include representatives from the Departments of Education, Justice, Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the White House Council on Women and Girls, among others.***

2. ***Transparent, accountable, inclusive.*** U.S. women from civil society expressed a real desire to be more fully engaged in and informed about governmental processes related to women, peace and security. As one participant shared: *"In all my 86 years, I have never been to a program where I have felt so close to power. We had a voice, and this is powerful."* ***Women from the grassroots and marginalized communities could be more fully included to ensure the NAP is relevant and has a mobilized constituency invested in its implementation. Recommendations from participants also stressed the U.S. NAP establish a formal monitoring and review body with equitable membership from women in civil society, as well as a comprehensive communications strategy to enhance transparency and accountability.***

A Case in Point: "Third World America."

While fully understanding the importance of international applications of UN SCR 1325 to protect and promote the rights of women in armed conflict, participants of the consultations most often focused on domestic applications of the resolution. Participants stressed that many U.S. urban centers resemble war-like settings due to high levels of violence and extreme living conditions. The African American ***infant mortality rate*** in Milwaukee, for example, is worse than the rate in Jamaica, the Ukraine, Costa Rica and 56 other countries. ***Unemployment rates*** for African American males in that same city stand at 53 percent. Girls as young as eight years old are being sold into ***sexual slavery***, participants reported, and ***forced prostitution*** is a problem highlighted across the country. Elder women are living in ***severe poverty***. Women survivors of violence are repeatedly victimized by the ***absence of adequate, comprehensive services and legal protections***. Meanwhile, participants stressed, federal and state budget cuts have ***eroded or eliminated the social safety net for women and children***, and eligibility requirements are ever more onerous and intrusive—including proposed mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients. As one participant put it, "We are living in a war zone with third world conditions right here in the United States. Where is the rule of law? Where are human rights?"

3. ***Peace begins at home.*** Consultation participants expressed support for the U.S. NAP goal of supporting women as equal partners for peace, and insisted the domestic status of U.S. women be linked to this effort. Participants pointed out that federal and state-level U.S. women’s machinery has been largely eliminated or defunded, leaving a vacuum for monitoring the government’s implementation of its gender equality commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action. Additionally, while U.S. women face a 74 percent pay gap and rank 69th in the world for female elected officials, the U.S. still has not ratified CEDAW. ***Participants called for the U.S. NAP to include specific quotas for women at all levels of decision-making, internationally and domestically, in elected and executive positions—including those related to peace and security, such as local and state police, the judiciary, immigration control and enforcement, among others. Participants also called for international standards to be referenced in the NAP, and urged the ratification of CEDAW, the CRC, the Rome Statute and other relevant UN treaties.***

4. ***Address the Continuum of Violence.*** Participants pointed to the need to recognize in policy the continuum of insecurity that links violence against women with international armed conflict and militarism, at home and abroad. The myriad psycho-social impacts of the structural violence of poverty and gender discrimination; the perpetuation of hyper-masculine identities grounded in violent domination as *the* source of power; the sexualized images of women in the media; the prevalence of violence against women in the home and in communities as an indicator of societal instability; the proliferation of small arms and the rise of prostitution and sexual slavery near military bases; sexual assault and harassment of female military service members—these are a few examples brought up in consultations that link oppression of women to militarism. Consultation input stressed that the best way to protect women from war is to prevent it, and education, health, and economic opportunities enhance the overall status of women, including their ability to participate in leadership roles, to protect themselves and their children from actual and threatened violence, and to equitably access vital services. ***Participants recommended the U.S. 1325 NAP explicitly address the continuum of violence and to adopt a holistic perspective of peace based on equality, human rights, and human security for all, including the most marginalized, applied both domestically and internationally.***

5. ***Reduce Military Spending, Invest in Peace.*** Participants pointed out that arms deals make up the largest share of U.S. exports even as private sector contractors carry little accountability. As one participant stated, “*We are not exporting democracy. We are exporting militarism.*” A militarized approach to foreign relations has overwhelmed diplomatic efforts, and international aid and development projects are subsumed by counter-terrorism objectives, putting women at risk. Participants stressed that U.S. “exceptionalism” makes the country less rather than more secure. The use of drones, the policies of military detention and the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes were cited by participants as questionable under international law. Domestically, military spending is draining domestic budgets and militarism has saturated daily life. Participants pointed to a rise in racial profiling and Islamophobia; police brutality and state violence; the criminalization of poverty, disease, and addiction; multi-generational cycles of poverty and incarceration; inhumane immigration detention and deportation policies; and environmental degradation from weapons use and manufacturing. The best remedy, participants stressed, was investment in building a culture of peace. ***Participants called for the NAP to address accountability of private contractors and the U.S. government to international law; to provoke a shift from military spending to an investment in human security and social safety nets; to include comprehensive peace education in schools; and to support a fully developed Department of Peace as a means to affect a doctrinal shift of U.S. leadership from military dominance to a culture of peace.***

The views expressed, while based on consultations, are the responsibility of WILPF and are not necessarily the views of our funders, partners, or every participant. For more information, contact WILPF’s U.S. National Director, Tanya Henderson at thenderson@wilpf.org, (617) 266-0999, or www.wilpf.org