

21 October 2008

OPEN LETTER TO PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE UN: RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON *WOMEN'S EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND FULL INVOLVEMENT IN ALL EFFORTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND PROMOTION OF PEACE AND SECURITY*

Dear Ambassador,

The Security Council will hold an Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security on the 29th October, 2008, with the theme: "Women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security." The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG) urges you to take this opportunity to critically assess concrete and specific efforts to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, and to particularly focus on the role of the Security Council in such efforts.

In the eight years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), there has been some notable and encouraging progress in implementation. However, implementation has been uneven, and is problematic in the area of participation. As noted in the Secretary General's report on women, peace and security (S/2008/622), and at the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2008), concrete advancements in the equal inclusion of women in peace talks, justice processes, peacekeeping are still woefully inadequate.

There is an urgent need for the UN and Member States to show strong leadership on this issue, and to address the many structural and institutional impediments to women's participation. It is vital that the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), with its key role in peace negotiations managing political missions in some country-specific situations, actively works to ensure that the Security Council and the UN as a whole meet their commitments to women's inclusion. The current situation, in which there is limited dedicated funding and no Senior Gender Adviser within the department, makes it particularly difficult for DPA to fulfill this crucial role. A strengthened and consolidated UN entity for women will also help to ensure that women are included in key political processes.

This year's Open Debate is an opportunity to advance the implementation of Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, and to agree to concrete steps that can improve women's participation in all aspects of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In addition to your own national reporting, we hope that you will consider the following suggestions for how the Security Council can increase women's participation in the UN system, and in the vital areas of peace processes, justice processes, and peacekeeping:

UN System

- Express support for the creation of a UN entity for women that has greater status, funding, country-presence and normative and operational functions that will ensure the effective implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820.
- Support the establishment of a Gender Unit and Senior Gender Adviser in the Department of Political Affairs, as called for in the 2004 Secretary-General's report on Women, Peace and Security (S/2004/814), including support for this initiative in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

Peace Processes

- Urge the Security Council to institutionalize women's equal and substantive participation in all levels of peace and security decision-making, particularly in peace talks. Rather than women being marginalized, as has happened in the Uganda peace process, women's full participation in peace processes should be mandated. A key element of this increased participation is the role civil society can play in facilitating women's inclusion.

- Call on the Security Council to refuse to recognize peace processes that exclude women, just as the Council has expressed disapproval of amnesty agreements that violate international law.
- Call on the Security Council, UN entities and Member States to include women in discussions and decision-making in relation to their security needs and concerns. In particular, women's issues must be included in all aspects of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (DDRRR), such as ensuring that the link between guns and violence against women is addressed when drafting reconstruction policies and laws.

Justice Processes

- Support and call on all Member States to increase the number of women in the judiciary and the legal profession in conflict-affected situations as a means of, *inter alia*, increasing access of women to justice and ending impunity for sexual and gender-based violence.

Peacekeeping

- Call on the Security Council and Member States to ensure greater participation of women in the police and civilian units of UN Peacekeeping missions. This will advance effective gender mainstreaming, enhance the ability of peacekeeping missions to fulfill their protection mandates, and is seen as key to reducing sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.
- Call on the Secretary-General to appoint more women to high-level positions in UN field missions.

The NGOWG looks forward to your engagement with these issues and recommendations. We are confident that such measures will accelerate the implementation of resolutions 1325 and 1820, and improve the degree to which women are able to actively participate in decision-making.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information or to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

SARAH TAYLOR, COORDINATOR, NGO WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

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