

Snapshot of the Security Council and Women, Peace and Security in 2017

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Each year brings new opportunities and challenges for women, peace and security (WPS) implementation by the Security Council. The work of the Security Council continues to evolve. Beyond renewing mandates of peacekeeping and political missions, there are emerging crises, and complicated protracted conflicts that require attention. With competing political priorities and a growing workload, cross-cutting issues, such as gender and women's participation, become marginalized. The five new elected members of the Security Council that take their seats each year also have an influence. The composition of the Security Council changes its political dynamics and the consistency with which WPS is implemented; this is why permanent and elected members of the Security Council need to be strong WPS champions.

The WPS agenda is grounded in the premise that women's rights and participation are important to sustainable peace and security. However, due in part to a disconnect in policy making conversations which consider WPS as irrelevant to "realistic" or "pragmatic" peace and security decisions, WPS remains inconsistently discussed and implemented by the Security Council. Implementing the WPS agenda, including by addressing the gender dimensions of peace and security issues, require considering the way in which women, men, girls, boys and gender nonconforming individuals are both involved in and impacted by the situation – at every stage, in every process, in every country.

Critical gains made one year can always be scaled back the next. For example, on [Afghanistan](#), the Council has typically included strong language on WPS throughout its resolutions renewing the mandate of UNAMA. However, in 2017, the resolution length was cut significantly, resulting in the removal of most of the provisions on women's rights and participation. Although there were some small, positive tweaks in the 2017 resolution and the core mandate of UNAMA related to women's rights remains unchanged, the elimination of such strong, WPS language, in service to streamlining resolution text, only undermines the Council's own commitment to WPS.

Positive momentum has also been evident this year, particularly relating to crisis outcome documents adopted by the Council. So far, nearly all have made strong WPS references, many of which emphasized the importance of women's participation, up from **39% in 2015** to **58% in 2016**. It is hoped this positive trend continues for the rest of the year. The 2015 commitment in [Resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#) to invite civil society, including women's organizations, to country-specific briefings is finally gaining traction after 2016, which only saw one in December. Although civil society country-specific briefings are far from being institutionalized, it should be noted that in 2017 there have already been 5 such briefings.

Over the last 17 years, we have learned that it is critical to remain vigilant about seemingly small working methods changes and fluctuations in the political dynamics of the Security Council in order to ensure it is held accountable for its WPS commitments. This is why the NGO Working Group dedicates significant resources and attention to monitoring and analyzing the full cycle of decision making by the Security Council. Following the release of our [2016 trends](#), here is a snapshot of what we have observed so far in 2017.

Peace Operations

- The mandates for the peacekeeping missions in **Cyprus, the DRC, Haiti, Western Sahara, and Sudan (Abyei)** and the political missions in **Guinea-Bissau, Afghanistan, and Somalia** have been renewed in 2017 – so far, there haven't been any changes to WPS mandate provisions.
- The existing peacekeeping mission in **Haiti** is being replaced with a follow-up mission focused on rule-of-law, police, and human rights monitoring, with a mandate to address gender as a cross-cutting issue.
- There is new language on women, peace and security in resolutions renewing the mandates of the missions in **Western Sahara, Sudan (Abyei)** and **Somalia**.
- The resolution renewing the mandate of the political mission in **Afghanistan** was significantly reduced in length and language on human rights, protection of civilians, development and women, peace and security was removed, including important references to women's participation and the protection of women's rights.

The **mandate** for the peacekeeping operation in **Haiti** was renewed for a final six months prior to its transition to a new mission, UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). The mandate for MINUJUSTH has a provision that gender should be as a cross-cutting component of its mandate, however it does not detail additional efforts to support women's meaningful participation and empowerment in other mandate components.

Positively, there was new language emphasizing the importance of women, participation in the resolutions renewing the mandates of the peacekeeping missions in **Western Sahara, Sudan (Abyei)**, and the political mission in **Somalia**.

In **mandate** for the peacekeeping operation in **Western Sahara**, the language calling for women's meaningful participation is in a preambular paragraph focused on the peace process; given the lack of attention to WPS in the context of Western Sahara, historically, this small addition is a very positive improvement. Notably, **analysis suggests** that Sweden proposed the inclusion of this language, and it was included due to support from many other Council members. This only underlines the importance of elected Members of the Council actively supporting WPS in all country situations.

The resolution renewing the **mandate** of the peacekeeping mission in **Sudan (Abyei)** includes new language in the operative paragraphs calling for women's participation in all stages of the peace process, including at the local level, as well as for the deployment of a Women's Protection Adviser. This new language could reflect the outcomes of the strategic review on UNISFA which called for better attention to WPS in the work of the mission (see below).

The **mandate** for the political mission in **Somalia** was renewed with several new references to women, peace and security in both preambular and operative paragraphs, primarily focused on emphasizing the importance of women's participation in political processes and the constitutional review.

Finally, as previously mentioned, another notable change was in the resolution renewing the mandate of the political mission in Afghanistan. The length of the resolution was cut down significantly in an effort to cut what was seen as extraneous language; the result was, however,

the removal of essential language reinforcing the importance of human rights norms, including support for women's rights and the WPS agenda.

Strategic Reviews

The Security Council has discussed two strategic reviews of the peacekeeping missions in **Sudan (Abyei)** and **Sudan (Darfur)**. Both reviews contained several WPS references, primarily focusing on the prevalence of SGBV and the ways in which each mission currently addresses issues related to the protection of women. Notably, in the **strategic review** of the mission in **Sudan (Abyei)**, the Secretary-General includes a recommendation to strengthen the mission's overall approach to preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence. The **strategic review** of the mission in **Sudan (Darfur)**, similarly, includes a recommendation in the context of its protection of civilians activities, which notes that the mission should facilitate the participation of women, in addition to preventing SGBV, in order to establish a stable environment.

Crisis Response

- All seven presidential statements adopted so far have referred to WPS; most references have been focused on women's participation in peace processes or elections.
- The resolution adopted on the **Lake Chad Basin region** includes strong references on a range of women, peace and security issues.

The Council has generally continued to increase its inclusion of WPS in decisions, both resolutions and presidential statements, adopted on crisis situations in 2017. Although only one of the two resolutions adopted on crisis situations included reference to WPS, all presidential statements adopted thus far have included references to WPS, the majority of which were focused on women's participation in political and peace processes. Notably, the **resolution** adopted on the **Lake Chad Basin region** serves as an example of good practice in its inclusion of WPS.

Further, all reports focused on country-specific crisis situations thus far have included references to WPS. Notably, one report on **Syria** included a reference to engagement with civil society, including the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, although there was not substantive detail regarding the quality of this engagement or information regarding future efforts.

For those crisis situations that were considered in presidential situations or resolutions, thus far in 2017 and 2016 (**CAR, DRC, Somalia, South Sudan, West Africa, and Yemen**), there were no changes to WPS content. Unfortunately, the Council's discussion of the situation in The Gambia, continues to be gender-blind.

Sanctions

There has been one significant change in the context of sanctions regimes; importantly, in the designation criteria for the **CAR** sanctions, SGBV is now a separate criteria. There has been minimal reporting by associated sanctions groups and thus analysis of trends in 2017 thus far isn't possible.

Engagement with Civil Society Organizations

There hasn't been any change to civil society or human rights defender-related language in resolutions adopted in 2017, when compared to similar resolutions adopted in 2016; however, presidential statements have almost uniformly failed to refer to CSOs, with the exception of the newest presidential statement adopted on **Yemen**.

Thus far, in 2017, the Security Council has gone on two field missions, to the **Lake Chad Basin** and **Colombia**. The terms of reference (TOR) for both field missions referenced civil society. Council members met with civil society during both missions. In **Colombia**, the Security Council met with civil society at the end of its visit; so while it was briefed on key concerns for civil society, it was not able to incorporate these into its discussions with government representatives.

One of the most positive developments so far this year has been the increase in civil society representatives invited to brief the Security Council during country-specific briefings as committed to in **SCR 2242 (2015)**. Whereas 2016 saw one briefing in December; in 2017 women civil society leaders from **Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Yemen** have participated in discussions on those countries. These briefings are not yet institutionalized and require political investment from the rotating monthly presidents for them to occur.

Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security

In 2017, the Informal Expert Group, co-chaired by Sweden and Uruguay, has to date met on the **Lake Chad Basin, Yemen, Mali** and **Iraq**. The meeting on the **Lake Chad Basin region** was followed by a Security Council field mission to the region. It is likely that the IEG meeting beforehand contributed to the strength of the WPS references in both the TOR for the field mission and the resolution. More detailed analysis on how the IEG contributes and shapes Security Council decisions will be provided as part of our comprehensive 2017 analysis.