



MESSAGE
OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE
ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

OPEN DEBATE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL
SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 (2000)

“WOMEN’S EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND FULL INVOLVEMENT
IN ALL EFFORTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND PROMOTION OF
PEACE AND SECURITY”

The unanimous adoption of **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325** on 31 October 2000 was a watershed in the evolution of international women’s rights and peace and security issues. Resolution 1325 was the first Security Council Resolution specifically addressing the disproportionate and unique impact of war on women and children, as well as women’s contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. The Resolution expressed concern that women and children accounted for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict. As such, it urges Member States to take specific actions to ensure women’s equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. The resolution is historic not only in that it constituted the first time the Council systematically addressed the manner in which conflict affects women and girls differently from men and boys, but also because it acknowledges the crucial link between peace, protection of women and girls during and after conflicts, and women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325, the Security Council has held seven open debates on the implementation of the resolution and has adopted seven presidential statements and one press release. These debates addressed a broad range of issues including gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations, increasing the number of women at the highest levels of decision-making and ending impunity for those committing sexual and gender-based violence. The presidential statements have called on Member States, the United Nations system and civil society to commit to the full implementation of the resolution, including through the development of strategies and action plans with goals and timetables, the establishment of monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the international and national levels and ensuring full and equal participation of women in all peace processes.

Building on the momentum generated by the resolution, the Security Council adopted **Resolution 1820** in June 2008 which focuses specifically on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1820 “demands the immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians,” urges Member States and the UN system to strengthen their efforts in providing protection and facilitating equal and full participation of women at decision-making levels, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council in June 2009 on the implementation of the resolution.

Based on information from civil society organizations, UN entities and Member States, important progress has been realized in the implementation of the resolution in areas ranging from gender mainstreaming in the area of peace and security, response to violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, work on security sector reform including the issue of impunity to support for greater participation of women in all peace, humanitarian and reconstruction processes. In recent years there has been an increase on the proportion of female soldiers and police officers in peace missions. Female police officers are indispensable, and in particular for taking care of women victims of rape and assisting them in reporting such crimes. In addition, peacekeeping mandates and the programmes of UN entities increase access to humanitarian services and support the maintenance of the civilian nature of refugee camps.

However, while women increasingly play an important role as partners in mediating and negotiating peace, in searching for justice, in fostering reconciliation, in supporting disarmament and demobilization, and in rebuilding national institutions, at the national level, they are still vastly underrepresented in the majority of security, peace and governance processes worldwide.

Women often organize at the grass roots level in order to promote peace but their access to formal peacemaking and peace building processes continues to be limited, including in terms of peace agreements and their implementation, constitution drafting, security sector, democratic governance and legal reform measures. Very few women are included in peace negotiations or in politics of governance in general in countries affected by conflict and war, and their experiences are not taken into account. Very few peace agreements have taken a gender and human rights perspective into account. Women's voices and concerns have often been excluded in decisions that affect the economic and power structures of post-conflict reconstruction, from land and property rights and access to education and healthcare to legislation issues, disarmament and reintegration, and the status of internally displaced persons. Despite a plethora of conferences, advocacy from NGOs, from politicians, world leaders, and diplomats, not enough has happened. Women continue to be excluded from negotiations, treaty-making, interim and transition-appointed governments, in planning and implementing humanitarian aid, post-conflict reconstruction planning and policy-making. On the whole, peace processes remain a male exclusive endeavor where men negotiate power, and largely set the post-conflict agenda. For the principles of democracy and good governance to take root in countries coming out of conflict, it is vital that both women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the ongoing processes.

Effective and appropriate interventions to support women and girls affected by war and violent conflict are hampered by a general lack of reliable information and analysis regarding the situation of women and girls in many post-conflict countries, although some inroads are being made into this information gap. Concerted efforts at the international and national level are needed to stimulate research and knowledge sharing in the field of women, peace and security to inform effective policy and program interventions.

Experience around the world suggests that women's contribution during conflict emergencies can make a critical difference to community survival and reconstruction. At the local and community level, women have held families together during crises, and have been critical in maintaining household economies. Women have often demonstrated their ability to set up networks that transcend the dividing lines of conflicts.

Women's advocacy groups and the national women's machineries have been active in translating the resolution into action. They have been active in advocating for greater participation of women in decision-making, and in particular in preparing women for participation in development of humanitarian programming to post-conflict elections.

Together with the UN, civil society groups have trained women in leadership, and carried out civic and electoral education programmes, with the intention of increasing the number of women in public office.

Sadly, even though many Member States have actively supported Resolution 1325, the practical implementation of its goals remains a huge challenge. Many countries still often lack the political will to effectively implement the resolution. It is important for countries emerging from conflict to invest in combating root causes of discrimination and violations of women's human rights in order to build capacity and encourage women's participation for sustainable recovery and reconstruction for all.

Very few instruments are available to assess the impact that conflict and reconstruction have on women and girls and women's and girls' rights. Common standards are needed to assist Member States and civil society organizations to establish systematic monitoring systems that track the progress on the resolution. Currently, arbitrary reporting on the resolution does not accurately reflect the real progress made or the serious gaps in implementation.

This tracking of progress could be done in conjunction with other thematic Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict and Protection of Civilians to ensure that these are all mutually supportive.

The implementation of the goals of the resolution requires a sustained advocacy effort, technical expertise and understanding of gender equality at international, national and local levels. Furthermore, international attention and funding for women and girls' issues have decreased in recent years. Members of the Security Council and other Member States are thus encouraged to maintain the momentum and keep the issue of women's and girls' rights on the agenda of the peace and security discourse by providing political support, financial resources and strengthening cooperation in order to accelerate the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000), and finally achieve women's full and equal participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security".