Where We Stand Statement: Women, Peace and Security

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Position Summary:

- United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) is the core reference document advocating for the meaningful participation of women as decision makers and leaders in peace processes;
- Governments must make a conscious effort to fully implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, protection, and relief efforts to actively promote and achieve sustainable peace globally.

Where Things Stand:

On 31 October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 represents a milestone in the fight for women's fundamental human rights, marking the first time the UN Security Council devoted a resolution for women during peace and conflict. Thus, UNSCR 1325 has become a core reference document for efforts to deal with the many challenges that women and girls face in situations of conflict, including pre- and post-conflict.

UNSCR is formulated under four fundamental pillars:

1. Participation: women as participants;
2. Protection: women support the restoration of peace;
3. Prevention: women are part of the efforts to prevent violence; and
4. Relief and recovery: women help to keep peace in society every day.

Since the adoption of 1325, there have been a further nine supporting UNSCRs – 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493. Together, these Resolutions are bolstered by several related normative frameworks, which make up the broader WPS agenda. Other key reference points are the Beijing Platform for Action (12 Action Points, specifically Point E on women and armed conflict), the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Women's meaningful participation in global and peace and security efforts has proven to help reach the conclusion and implementation of more sustainable peace agreements. In addition, women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes is a vital component of a country's economic development. Bringing women to the table is therefore fundamental to the operational effectiveness of peace and security efforts worldwide, including to strengthen the protection efforts of peacekeepers, improve prevention of radicalisation and accelerate economic recovery.

Despite widespread acknowledgement of how the WPS Agenda contributes to conflict prevention and sustained peace, and its role as a "prerequisite" for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there has been little progress on UN Member State commitments to ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace processes. Women continue to face entrenched barriers to direct participation in peace and political processes, and women's organisations struggle to find resources, while military spending continues to grow every year. Since 2022, the number of conflict-related deaths has surpassed a 22-year high. This has had catastrophic consequences for people and communities and has led to unprecedented levels of displacement.

The international community now faces unparalleled challenges to global peace and security. The number of people in need of international assistance is reaching record levels, with close to 300 million people worldwide in need of humanitarian assistance and protection due to conflicts, climate emergencies and other drivers in 2024. In addition, traditional conflicts are aggravated by new threats including climate emergencies, global health pandemics, a rising wave of violent extremist groups directly targeting women's rights, and a widespread rollback of human rights at large.

Global politics is marked by failures to respect, protect and fulfill the most fundamental human rights in conflict and conflict-affected settings. Without addressing structural issues of inequality and the exclusion of women at all levels, as well as the disregard for international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, no significant advancement in meaningful participation or even increases in 'women at the table' can be made.

Where things need to go...

In a time of escalating global insecurity, objective recognition must be given to the enduring and extensive absence of women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes at a global scale and within regions or nations. The WPS Agenda, now more than ever, must be fully implemented as a critical tool for building sustainable peace and economically strong communities.

Fundamental Actions:

Enhancing women's engagement for sustainable peace requires an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses conflict prevention, resolution and recovery, while strengthening national accountability and ensuring women's protection from all forms of human rights violations, including physical and sexual violence.

It is vital that:

- Governments fully implement all aspects of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and all subsequent, related Resolutions;
- Governments develop, implement and monitor National Action Plans as a requirement under UNSCR 1325;
- All state and non-state actors should promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution by involving women and girls in the development of a culture of peace and non-violence;
- State and non-state actors comply with international law in all conflict settings to ensure the protection of civilians and the respect for the human rights of all women and girls in particular;
- Governments consider greater use of conditions, incentives and accountability tools, including but not limited to international criminal proceedings, in order to strengthen the protection of all women and girls in conflict-affected countries;
- Governments ensure that national mechanisms are in place to investigate reports of human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure accountability by implementing remedies and protection measures for victims;
- Governments should cooperate with civil society and humanitarian agencies to ensure that gender sensitive humanitarian relief can be safely delivered to affected populations during and post-conflict, including menstrual hygiene kits for example;
- Governments should mainstream gender across all activities relating to peacebuilding and peacekeeping by making training and resources available to women and women's organisations involved in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution – including leadership training, negotiation skills and knowledge on human rights and international law;
- Government officials should establish and build upon existing modules, training and guidelines on gender-sensitivity and cultural diversity across peace and

security mandates to sensitise officials to the specific needs of all women and girls during and after armed conflict; and

- Systematic mechanisms of surveillance, protection and recovery systems should be established to prevent and eliminate the violation of all women's rights, as well as to protect those affected by conflict situations, in particularly women and children.

Additional Actions:

- Female officials and women should be encouraged and supported to become agents of change, including by taking leadership roles in the WPS agenda;
- Women should be meaningfully involved in monitoring and reporting mechanisms in post-conflict negotiations;
- Governments must make a conscious effort to change attitudes of its officials and citizens, including troops, police and civilian personnel working in conflict situations and peacekeeping operations;
- Early education including in schools should be encouraged to promote the concept of peace, leading to a genuine awareness of justice, freedom, dignity, and equality for all people;
- Build and strengthen partnerships between countries, international organisations and civil society which encourage the exchange of ideas between communities and individuals from diverse countries and cultures; and
- Build and strengthen partnerships between countries, international organisations and civil society to share best practices and coordinate efforts.

Where Soroptimist International Stands:

Soroptimist International advocates for the equal inclusion of women in all peacemaking activities and the maintenance of sustainable peace. Soroptimist International continues to:

- Support the SDGs and all UN initiatives working to progress international peace and security, particularly in initiatives to promote the involvement of women and girls in peacebuilding and peacekeeping;
- Draw to the attention of governments and other stakeholders the impact of conflict on all women and children and to demonstrate the economic and social benefits of a culture of peace and non-violence; and
- Implement its commitment to peace, security, and justice for all people in practical ways through grassroots projects, with special attention paid to the particular needs of all women and girls.

Soroptimist International supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its Federations, Unions, Regions, Clubs, by working on the ground with partner organisations and UN agencies to Educate, Empower and Enable all women and girls everywhere.

Sources:

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