POSITION PAPER BY THE EDVAW PLATFORM ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA

November 2025

1) INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda stands at a pivotal moment.[1] Conceived as a transformative and normative framework, UNSCR 1325 was revolutionary for its time, establishing four interdependent pillars, **participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery**, as the cornerstone of international peace and security.[2] It marked a fundamental shift in the paradigm by establishing women's full, equal and meaningful participation not only as a question of equality but a critical operational necessity for sustainable peace, and by recognizing conflict-related sexual violence as a deliberate tactic of warfare that requires a systematic security response.[3]

This pioneering resolution gave rise to a robust framework of normative commitments, including nine subsequent resolutions that address critical gaps—from sexual violence in conflict (UNSCR 1820) to the inclusion of women in peacebuilding (UNSCR 1889), linking gender equality and women's empowerment as critical to international peace and security (UNSCR 2122), and the gendered dimensions of violent extremism conducive to terrorism and the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations (UNSCR 2242). As a response to this agenda, National Action Plans (NAPs) have now been adopted in over 110 countries.[4] These developments reflect significant progress in establishing global standards and promoting coordinated action. At the same time, the implementation of these frameworks has highlighted areas for further improvement. While the creation of a NAP represents a meaningful step, plans do not necessarily

[1] Cohn, C. (Ed.). (2012). Women and Wars: Contested Histories, Uncertain Futures. Polity Press. Retrieved from https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=women-and-wars-contested-histories-uncertain-futures--9780745642451

[2] UN Security Council. (2000, October 31). Resolution 1325. S/RES/1325 (2000). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325-2000-sres1325-2000

[3] Shepherd, L. J. (2021). Narrating the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Logics of Globalism. Oxford University Press.

[4] UN Women. (2024, October 18). Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security. https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security

mean implementation of the Agenda in full, and many continue to face challenges such as limited budgets, monitoring mechanisms, or civil society engagement.[5]

Consequently, twenty-five years after its inception, the transformative potential of UNSCR 1325 continues to be realized unevenly, with opportunities to further strengthen political commitment and accountability. While progress has been made, ongoing challenges, such as rising geopolitical instability, escalating armed conflicts, and increasing pressures on women's rights, highlight the importance of continued attention and coordinated action.[6] In 2023 alone, over 612 million women and girls lived in proximity to conflict—a 50 per cent increase from a decade prior—while verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence rose at a comparable rate, a sobering measure of the agenda's failure to deliver tangible protection.[7]

The persistent gap between policy and practice is exacerbated by two key challenges: a lack of political will and insufficient financing. While global military expenditure reached a record $2.44 trillion in 2023, a mere 0.3 per cent of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts reaches women-led organizations, the very actors most effective in local peacebuilding.[8] Furthermore, the agenda's credibility is undermined by perceived inconsistencies and selective implementation. Ensuring that the WPS framework is applied universally and grounded in the same principles across all contexts is essential to maintaining its legitimacy.[9] Escalating acts of aggression between Member States and international armed conflict undermines efforts to reduce military spending and channel resources into peacebuilding. The crises converge with continued systematic exclusion of women from conflict resolution and peace processes worldwide, where they constitute only a small fraction of formal participants.[10] The 25th year of UNSCR 1325 must serve as a critical inflection point—a moment for radical accountability and a strategic pivot from commitment to tangible, effective and sufficiently resourced action.

The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) affirms that the future relevance of the WPS agenda hinges on its ability to transcend rhetoric; reaffirm commitment, confront the current regression in its implementation and deliver both tangible security and

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[5] Otto D (2016). Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Analysis of the Security Council's Vision. Retrieved from https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2016/wps1Otto.pdf See also Hudson H (2025) Re-"Turning" to the Future: The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda at 25. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/29769442251324712

[6] The Global Observatory. (2025, January). The Highs and Lows of Women, Peace and Security in 2024 and Looking Ahead to 2025. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2025/01/the-highs-and-lows-of-women-peace-and-security-in-2024-and-looking-ahead-to-2025/

[7] n 4 above

[8] Fitzgerald, M. (2025, April 4) & UN Women. (2024, October 18).

[9] Ibid

[10] Ibid

meaningful participation for all women and girls. This requires an unwavering focus on reasserting the safety, dignity and humanity of women and girls in conflict situation; closing the financing gap; and guaranteeing their full, equal, and safe participation in all peace and security institutions. The commitment by States and all relevant stakeholders to the WPS agenda must be reasserted globally and applied consistently across all conflicts.

2) WORK AND MANDATE OF THE EDVAW PLATFORM

The EDVAW Platform gathers seven[11] United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms dedicated to addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls, promoting accountability, and advancing women's and girls' rights at the international and regional levels.[12]

The Platform's mandate is to represent and coordinate the efforts of its member mechanisms, which monitor the implementation of legislative frameworks addressing structural and interpersonal violence and discrimination against women and girls.[13] A key aim is to strengthen institutional links and thematic co-operation between the mechanisms with a view to developing harmonised strategies and undertaking joint action.[14] By enhancing this collaboration, its goal is to improve the implementation of existing international and regional legal and policy frameworks developed to end discrimination and violence against women and to make these mechanisms more visible and accessible to all.

Collectively, these mechanisms play a pivotal role in ensuring state accountability for international and regional obligations towards women and girls, advocating for laws and policies that ensure equality, and drawing attention to systemic and emerging issues. Through the Platform, their collaborative work enables the exchange of promising practices, and articulation of common positions on priority concerns.

3) OBJECTIVE OF THE POSITION PAPER: A 25-YEAR CROSSROADS

This position paper is issued at a moment of profound consequence, that is, the twenty fifth (25th) anniversary of the WPS agenda. A silver anniversary is traditionally a time of celebration and reflection; however, this milestone arrives amidst global challenges

[11] The seven member mechanisms are: The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA); The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO); The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Rapporteur on the Rights of Women (IAHRWR); The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI); The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (SR VAWG); and The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAWG)

[12] https://www.ohchr.org/en/edvaw

[13] Ibid

[14] Ibid

that threaten to undo the fragile gains achieved thus far. We are at a critical crossroads, where the gap between the agenda's normative aspirations and the devastating realities for women and girls in conflict has never been wider or more concerning.[15]

This paper is conceived as a strategic intervention, leveraging the symbolic weight of this quarter-century milestone to issue an urgent call for radical accountability and a reassertion of an unwavering commitment to implementation. The importance of WPS turning 25 lies in its function as an unambiguous deadline—a moment to audit the promises of the past and demand the tangible outcomes required to ensure a secure and just future.

The anniversary arrives at a time of escalating global crises that threaten to unravel decades of precarious progress.[16] These crises are compounded by an orchestrated global backlash against gender equality, manifested in the institutionalisation of severe discrimination, gender persecution, and exclusion, most starkly illustrated in Afghanistan, and by the resurgence of specific forms of violence against women and girls, including gender-based persecution, conflict-related sexual violence, and restrictions on their rights and participation. Furthermore, women human rights defenders and women's organizations, including in crisis and humanitarian settings, continue to be targeted.[17]

In Sudan, a brutal war has triggered the world's largest displacement crisis, with over 9 million people forcibly displaced, and women and girls constituting an estimated 70% of those fleeing across borders, facing pervasive sexual violence and exploitation, with limited support from the international community.[18] This is not an isolated case but part of a regional pattern of protracted crises and fragmented non-international armed conflicts and violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the UN verified 733 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2023 alone, a figure that

[15] Fitzgerald, M. (2025, April 4). The Women, Peace and Security agenda at 25: time to move beyond words. Friends of Europe. https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/critical-thinking-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-at-25-time-to-move-beyond-words/

[16] UN Women. (2024, October 18). Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security. https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security.

[17] Ibid

[18] Amnesty International. (April 2024 and 2025 Reports). Sudan: One year since conflict began, response from international community remains woefully inadequate. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/sudan-one-year-since-conflict-began-response-from-international-community-remains-woefully-inadequate/ & Sudan: Two years of war and shameful international neglect. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/sudan-two-years-of-war-and-shameful-international-neglect/. See also Sudan Situation: Regional Refugee Response. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

represents only a fraction of the true scale of war crimes and atrocities endured by women and perpetrated by state and non-state armed groups.[19]

These regressions occur as the international community's commitment wavers, evidenced by a decline in funding for gender equality and violence against women initiatives. This anniversary must be understood as the final warning before the agenda risks irrelevance. It is a last opportunity for States and stakeholders to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality. We must move beyond the proliferation of NAPs that lack budgets and the hollow resolutions that are not enforced.[20] The urgency of this milestone must be harnessed to demand a future in which the WPS agenda functions not as a set of aspirational ideals, but as an operational blueprint for delivering tangible peace, security, and justice for all women and girls globally.

4) ENGAGEMENT OF THE EDVAW PLATFORM MEMBERS WITH THE WPS AGENDA

a) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The establishment of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA) by the Commission in 1999 marked a pivotal commitment to advancing gender equality across the continent. As a key independent mechanism, the mandate of the SRRWA is to promote and protect the rights of women in Africa, serving as a critical advocate and monitor for the implementation of regional standards. It is within this context that the engagement of the SRRWA with the WPS agenda represents a sophisticated and multi-layered strategy, deeply embedded within a progressive, African-led normative architecture.

The foundational bedrock for this critical work is provided by the robust African Human Rights System, which is further energized and operationalized through key African Union peace and security initiatives. Pioneering legal frameworks, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol)—which legally mandates women's participation in peace processes—the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, and the new African Union Convention on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls, establish a powerful normative standard. This agenda is championed at the highest levels by the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, who advocates for the full inclusion of women in

[19] Human Rights Watch. (2023). DRC: Widespread Rape by Armed Groups and Government Forces. HRW. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/13/dr-congo-killings-rapes-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels. See also https://www.hrw.org/africa/democratic-republic-congo

[20] Fitzgerald, M. (2025, April 4). The Women, Peace and Security agenda at 25: time to move beyond words. Friends of Europe. https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/critical-thinking-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-at-25-time-to-move-beyond-words/

peace and security decision-making across the continent. Furthermore, these efforts are strategically aligned with the aspirations of Agenda 2063, specifically its first aspiration for "*A Prosperous Africa Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development,*" which calls for silencing the guns by 2030 and is underpinned by a fundamental commitment to gender equality as a prerequisite for lasting peace and security. To ensure a coordinated institutional response, the Commission's Focal Person on Conflict-Related Matters works to mainstream these principles into the AU's conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. These frameworks are brought to life through dynamic instruments like the Continental Results Framework, which institutes a rigorous system of accountability for Member States, and the creation of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). FemWise-Africa is a pivotal initiative that cultivates a continent-wide pipeline for women mediators, directly translating policy into practice and ensuring that women are present at the table where peace is negotiated and sustained.

Within this robust ecosystem, a number of pivotal resolutions have been adopted : Resolution 111 on the Right to Remedy and Reparations for women and girls' victims of Sexual Violence (adopted in 2007);[21] Resolution 283 on the situation of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts (adopted in 2014);[22] Resolution on Violence against Women in armed conflicts in Africa - ACHPR/Res. 492 (LXIX) (adopted in 2021),[23] and Resolution 522 on the Protection of women against digital violence in Africa (adopted in 2022), where the Commission reiterated its concern over the increasingly gendered nature of digital violence[24] which strongly condemns the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Operationally, the SRRWA translates these legal norms into tangible action. This is demonstrated through the issuance of urgent appeals to Heads of State, demanding immediate ceasefires, the protection of civilians, and women's inclusion in peace talks. A prime example of this hands-on approach is the SRRWA's participation in the ACHPR Online Fact-Finding Mission to Sudan. The report from this critical venture, which documents atrocities and provides a gendered analysis of the conflict, was adopted at the 84th Ordinary Session of the ACHPR and is slated for public

[21] https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/111-resolution-right-remedy-and-reparation-women-and-girls-victims-o

[22] https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/283-resolution-situation-women-and-children-armed-conflict-achprres

[23] https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/492-violence-against-women-armed-conflicts-achprres-492-lxix-2021

[24] https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/522-resolution-protection-women-against-digital-violence-africa-achpr

dissemination following the ACHPR's standard internal procedures for finalizing such reports.

b) Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (SRVAWG) has strongly supported principles of the WPS agenda in her country visits' reports and engagements with States. The Special Rapporteur has long emphasized the continuum of violence against women, framing it as a continuum from peacetime to conflict, exacerbated in military environments.

The Special Rapporteur has also highlighted the increased vulnerability of women and girls in times of conflict and crisis to exploitation and abuse. In her report on prostitution and violence against women and girls (A/HRC/56/48), she highlighted how conflict and humanitarian emergencies have resulted in the further forced displacement and marginalization of women and girls, thereby increasing their vulnerability to becoming victims of the prostitution enterprise. She noted that prostitution systems in rich countries are supplied by migrant women from impoverished and war-torn countries. She called for an analysis of the aggravating factors and added the victimization of women leading to their exploitation in prostitution.

Furthermore, in her report on rape as a grave and systematic human rights violation (A/HRC/47/26), the SRVAWG explicitly references UNSCR 1325 and its follow-up resolutions, acknowledging sexual violence in conflict as a threat to international peace and security. She supports the WPS framework's call for special measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict and for their increased participation in peace processes.

Across multiple reports, including those on gender-related killings (A/HRC/20/16) and violence against indigenous women (A/HRC/50/26), the SRVAWG documents widespread sexual violence used as a weapon of war, including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriage.

More recently, the Special Rapporteur referred to emerging forms of violence in times of conflict, such as the use of femicide and reproductive genocide as tools of genocide, and called for their documentation and for accountability for these crimes (see the report on sex-based violence against women and girls: New frontiers and emerging issues and A/HRC/59/47).

She highlights the targeting of women human rights defenders, especially those advocating for land rights and peace, as a form of gendered repression in conflict zones. The SRVAWG references jurisprudence from the International Criminal Court (ICC) and ad hoc tribunals (ICTY, ICTR) to reinforce that rape and sexual violence in

conflict are prosecutable as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide. She advocates for victim-centered approaches and gender-sensitive reparations, aligning with WPS goals of justice and recovery.

In her 2022 report on violence in the context of climate change (A/77/136), she notes that only 17 out of 80 national WPS action plans mention climate change, urging greater integration of environmental risks into WPS frameworks. She documents how displacement and environmental degradation increase women's vulnerability to violence, trafficking, and exclusion from decision-making. The political economy of women's human rights' report (A/HRC/11/6) critiques post-conflict reconstruction processes that exclude women and fail to address their socio-economic rights, reinforcing structural inequalities. SRVAWG emphasizes that stability without justice is not sustainable and calls for women's full participation in peacebuilding and governance.

Throughout her reports and advocacy, the Special Rapporteur emphasized the importance of ensuring women's protection and their full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In one of her thematic reports, she also called for the protection of women journalists who exercise their job in conflict and protests (A/HRC/44/52), linking it to the WPS agenda, noting that the threats and attacks they suffer undermine women's participation in peace and accountability.

Furthermore, in her report (A/HRC/38/46) the Special Rapporteur cast the spotlight on a largely invisible group of women, namely stateless women and girls and their vulnerability in conflict (e.g., Myanmar's Rohingya), increasing risks of GBV, trafficking, child marriage, and exclusion from peace processes. She also expressed her concern regarding the deprivation of nationality as a counter-terrorism measure (e.g., stripping citizenship from women associated with foreign fighters), calling it cruel treatment violating WPS protections.

Finally, the Special Rapporteur has welcomed and highlighted the commitments that countries she has visited have shown to advancing the WPS agenda as well as called out the grave consequences that the continued export of arms to countries that target and kill women and girls in conflict constitute, as they constitute a blow to the WPS agenda, and further erode the protections that women and girls enjoy in times of conflict and peace.

The SRVAWG has conducted official visits to several countries experiencing armed conflict or significant instability, focusing on gender-based violence in these contexts. These visits include Libya (December 2022); Sudan (May 2025); Somalia (September 2011); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (October 2010 and July 2004); Afghanistan (May 2010) and a technical visit in April 2023; Colombia (April- May 2007); Nepal (September 2005), and Sierra Leone (June 2004). The reports on these

visits provided recommendations on how to improve the engagement on the WPS in these countries.

c) Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO)

Since the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2014, which led to the setting up of a two-tiered monitoring mechanism, GREVIO has been monitoring compliance with the Istanbul Convention's standards at the national level. Its reports and conclusions are followed up by recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties, the second pillar of the Istanbul Convention's monitoring mechanism.

Through its baseline evaluation procedure, GREVIO has offered a comprehensive assessment of the level of implementation in respect of 36 of the 39 parties to date. In addition, 11 evaluations have been carried out since September 2023 in the context of the first thematic evaluation round of monitoring, focusing on the theme of "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice."

The Istanbul Convention applies in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict, which creates a direct link with the WPS agenda. In its monitoring work, GREVIO has dealt with the impact of war on the protection of women from violence. This was, in particular, the case in its baseline evaluation report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which it highlighted the difficulties that women victims of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated during the war of the 1990s are confronted with. These difficulties include, among others: a lack of or inconsistent recognition of the status of victim of conflict-related sexual violence and of the associated rights and protection afforded; absence of compensation, including state compensation, for the harm suffered; and the imposition of sanctions for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence that are neither proportionate nor dissuasive, thereby creating a sense of arbitrariness and mistrust in the justice system.[25]

In July 2022, Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention, a few months after the beginning of the war of aggression by Russia, leading the Ukrainian authorities to implement the convention's provisions in time of war. GREVIO's baseline evaluation of the implementation of the convention by Ukraine is underway, and it will shed light on the situation of victims of sexual violence, their access to protection and support, as well as the different measures taken to ensure perpetrator accountability, among other issues. Its forthcoming report is based on written information provided by the

[25] GREVIO's Baseline evaluation report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2022.

authorities as well as by women's rights organizations and GREVIO's baseline evaluation visit to Ukraine carried out in May 2025.

d) The United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls

The United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WGDAWG) has long recognized the adoption in 2000 of the UNSCR 1325 on WPS as a historic breakthrough aimed at enhancing the role of women and integrating a gender perspective in peace processes relating to conflict prevention, management, and resolution.[26] Nonetheless, it has cautioned that women continue to be sidelined in peace processes despite the distinct and disproportionate impact of conflict on them and the commitments made by Member States. The vast majority of peace agreements reached have failed to include representatives of women's groups as observers, signatories, or witnesses.[27] The Working Group has also expressed serious concern about numerous situations and led communications and statements on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Afghanistan, Haiti, Yemen, and Sudan,[28] raising alarm on the widespread violations of women's and girls' rights in conflict and their lack of meaningful inclusion in peace, political transition, and/or post-conflict recovery processes.[29]

Furthermore, the Working Group has expressed concern that, although more than 600 million women and girls were living in conflict-affected countries, post-conflict reconstruction and recovery efforts significantly underfund women's priorities.[30] In that regard, it has recommended that States adopt a gendered assessment of post-conflict needs (including in areas such as access to justice, education, health care, and equal work opportunities) and ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, while addressing the structural conditions that make women vulnerable to violence and other human rights violations during conflicts. It has also addressed the distinct situations of women and girls living under occupation.[31]

The Working Group has urged an end to impunity for sexual violence committed against women and girls in conflict settings.[32] It has also raised concern that many violations of sexual and reproductive health rights continue to be either neglected or

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[26] A/HRC/23/50

[27] A/HRC/56/51

[28] WGDAWG-Statement-Gaza-2023.pdf; A/HRC/53/21; AL HTI (1.2024); AL YEM (2.2022); AL SDN (2.2024)

[29] The Working Group has also joined a number of communications on women and girls in conflict and/or post-conflict areas in other States, e.g. on the Democratic Republic of Congo (AL COD (6.2024)); Nepal (AL NPL (3.2023); Ukraine (AL RUS (10.2025)); and Syria (AL SYR (7.2025)).

[30] A/HRC/56/51

[31] A/HRC/56/51, para. 79.

[32] A/HRC/47/38

tolerated within conflict settings and crises, and that the collapse of the rule of law in post-conflict situations risks resulting in the masculinization of the law, regressions of women's rights, and a fundamental lack of transitional justice.[33] In that regard, the Working Group has emphasized the importance of gender-transformative reparations and other transitional justice measures for gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, ensuring that they challenge existing conditions, reshape gender-unequal structures, and dismantle the structural discrimination that led to the violation in the first place.[34]

The Working Group further warned that conflicts directly undermine care and support systems, especially where state and non-state actors intentionally destroy civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and housing.[35] This destruction intensifies the disproportionate care responsibility on women and girls, particularly in contexts like the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Sudan, where displacement and hardship are widespread. Protection of women and children is often overlooked, especially for pregnant women and new mothers, whose care duties escalate amid armed conflict, poverty, aid shortages, and restricted movement. The Working Group has further called for the upholding of international humanitarian law to protect civilians from harm and the safeguarding of healthcare workers, humanitarian personnel, and civilian care infrastructure from being targeted during armed conflict.

Finally, the Working Group has reiterated the need to ensure the protection of women HRDs whose work is often perceived as challenging traditional notions of family and gender roles in society and who are increasingly at risk of facing criminalization and detention as a result of their legitimate public activism. The Working Group has consistently called on all other stakeholders to support and protect women's engagement in public and political life, eliminate any measures designed to criminalize their advocacy, and ensure accountability for those who threaten and attack WHRDs and peacebuilders. This includes addressing the misuse of counter-terrorism laws and policies and use of overly broad terminologies of "violent extremism," that criminalize WHRDs and women-led civil society and target particular groups of women and girls on the basis of ethnicity, race and other intersecting identities. These threats have included the use of violence against WHRDs, including sexual violence in-person and online, aimed at silencing and deterring women from their activism. In this regard, the WG has also called for redoubling the efforts to prioritize long-term financial resources for grassroots

[33] A/HRC/56/51

[34] A/HRC/WG.11/42/1

[35] A/HRC/59/45

women's and girls' organizations in conflict-affected areas, ensuring that the voices of those most affected are elevated.

e) Follow-Up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)

MESECVI's Strategic Plan 2024-2029 underscores that women in Latin America and the Caribbean face a *continuum of violence*—armed, sexual, digital, institutional, and structural—exacerbated by organized crime, illicit arms, displacement, climate disasters, and systemic discrimination. As emphasized in its Strategic Plan, MESECVI stresses that violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean is profoundly exacerbated by the presence of firearms. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) links and intensifies all forms of gender-based violence, fuelling feminicides, lethal domestic abuse, and the control of territories by criminal organizations. Women face a continuum of violence: in the private sphere, through resistance to their rights and autonomy, and in the public sphere, through armed groups who inscribe their dominance on women's bodies and communities.

Latin America and parts of the Caribbean have become some of the world's most violent and heavily armed regions, with firearms directly undermining democracy, security, and women's human rights. MESECVI therefore calls for the urgent integration of a gender perspective into global and regional arms-control frameworks—including the Palermo Convention and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms. It has urged States to report specifically on the differentiated impacts of SALW on women and to align these with follow-up to UNSC Resolution 1325.

Through its Plan, MESECVI advocates for prevention policies that confront armed violence, paramilitarism, and organized crime as central obstacles to women's rights, while supporting feminist pro-peace and disarmament demands across the hemisphere.

Also, MESECVI represented by its Caribbean Experts, has supported a series of Caribbean consultations for developing the Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan for Trinidad and Tobago, making the country the first in the Caribbean to have a WPS-NAP. It supported the drafting process for the WPS-NAP and the launch of the WPS-NAP news report. MESECVI continues to work with CSOs and diverse populations of women across the Caribbean to identify what peace means to them and what measures they would like to see implemented.

MESECVI has been keeping track of several WPS related recommendations that have been emerging during the various Caribbean consultations and has been elevating the voices of women and girls.

MESECVI believes that there is a need to establish an Economic Security Fund for Women through which dedicated funding architectures can be created. These would provide pathways for no-collateral microfinance and business development support specifically for women in low-income and conflict areas, with an application process that is available in the local language and a simplified way to understand. It also advocates for using economic integration as a pathway for violence prevention. It has recommended that foreign investment and post-conflict reconstruction include quotas to build women-owned businesses across all sectors and that prevention programs be placed across all development and sustainable development programs.

f) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

On 9 September 2025, the CEDAW Committee released[36] its Advance Addendum to General Recommendation 30 on "Women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations" for public comments. This landmark Advance Addendum[37] articulates a vision of renewed multilateralism in the field of women, peace and security, firmly anchored in international law and responsive to the conflict dynamics of a rapidly changing world of geo-political and economic tension. The CEDAW Advance Addendum is premised on the Background Paper authored by CEDAW Member, Prof. Rangita de Silva de Alwis[38] and highlights pressing global challenges in an increasingly complex global peace and security landscape and identifies a wide spectrum of current threats to peace and security: the erosion of the civic space for women, the risks posed by the weaponization of emerging technologies, technology as a new battleground, AI in warfare, militarization of space, and the existential crisis of climate change, as new threats to peace and security. It also calls for an expanding legal framework of moral and material damage, historical memory, the shifting of shame and stigma from survivor to perpetrator, a shift from the singular focus on sexual violence in conflict to a more complex understanding of conflict related violence, a gender perspective to arms control an nuclear disarmament and the empowerment of human rights defenders, including student human rights defenders and more. It further underscores how the rollback of women's rights—constitute profound normative challenges that imperil the foundations of peace and security.

g) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The IACHR has recognized that the full participation of women in security and crisis management policies—such as those addressing armed conflicts, insecurity crises,

[36] cedaw-stm-aniv-25.pdf

[37] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/cedaw-c-gc-30-add-1-auv.docx

[38] Rangita de Silva de Alwis Background Paper https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/cedaw-committee-marks-25th-anniversary-wps-evolving-norms-new and https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/cedaw-c-gc-30-add-1-auv.docx

and health emergencies, among others—is essential to curbing the violence they face in daily life, which intensifies in these contexts. In this regard, it has emphasized that women's participation in public affairs is not only a right protected by the Belém do Pará Convention, but also a necessary condition to ensure that their specific protection priorities and needs are reflected in these policies. This, in turn, supports the achievement of objectives related to the prevention and reduction of crime, violence, and conflict. However, the IACHR has identified that women's participation in formal decision-making spaces remains limited. Therefore, it has recommended that States in the region create and institutionalize mechanisms that guarantee women's participation in the development of public security policies and crisis response strategies, at all levels of decision-making and throughout all stages.

With respect to violence occurring in the context of armed conflicts, in its "*Women in the Face of Violence and Discrimination Arising from the Armed Conflict in Colombia*" (2006) and "*The Road to a Substantive Democracy: Women's Political Participation in the Americas*" (2011), the IACHR urged States to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security, which calls for women's participation in decision-making processes aimed at resolving armed conflicts and for the adoption of measures to protect them from different forms of gender-based violence. Specifically, regarding Colombia, the IACHR recommended that the State adopt this Resolution as a guiding framework and ensure women's right to participate at all levels of decision-making concerning the conflict and its impact on their daily lives.

With respect to violence against women in contexts of organized crime, the IACHR has indicated that no citizen security goal can be achieved without considering the differentiated impacts that violence and crime have on them. In its thematic report "*Northern Central America: Impact of Organized Crime on Women, Girls, and Adolescents*" (2023), the Commission called on States to integrate the gender approach and ensure the participation of women, girls, and adolescents in all aspects of citizen security strategies and the fight against organized crime. In particular, it recommended implementing mechanisms for their participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies on citizen security, particularly those related to organized crime, ensuring the participation of women, girls, and adolescents from civil society, academia, women's rights and citizen security experts, among others, including those who have been linked to organized crime, whether as survivors or perpetrators.

The same report highlighted that, to guarantee the incorporation of a gender perspective into citizen security strategies, States must develop comprehensive, coordinated strategies in the training and conduct of security forces, as well as within the judicial, investigative, and criminal justice systems. Similarly, in its report *"Human Rights Situation in Haiti"* (2022), in order to address the citizen security crisis that the

country is experiencing, the IACHR recommended strengthening the National Police by promoting professionalization and gender-sensitive training, and by increasing the presence of women in leadership and command roles within security institutions.

In addition, the IACHR has monitored various manifestations of aggravated violence against women, girls, and adolescents in contexts of armed conflict and organized crime. In Haiti and the countries of northern Central America (Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador), the IACHR documented that sexual violence is a persistent reality in the lives of women, girls, and adolescents, particularly in territories controlled by organized crime groups. Other manifestations of violence in these contexts include disappearances, torture, contemporary forms of slavery and forced displacement.

Regarding Colombia, in its 2006 report, in the report *"Truth, Justice and Reparation"* (2013), and in several annual reports, the IACHR has referred to physical, psychological, sexual, and reproductive violence committed by state and non-state actors; forced displacement; forced recruitment; the social control by illegal armed groups in towns or territories under their control; threats and other forms of harassment and violence faced by women defenders of women's rights; and the particularly critical situation of indigenous and Afro-Colombian women.

The IACHR has also warned of the heightened risk and lack of protection faced by women human rights defenders, particularly those defending women's rights. Organizations working in this field play a crucial role in providing essential services to women victims of violence in areas controlled by armed groups, where state presence and services are limited and insufficient. However, these efforts and attempts to influence the public agenda for the solution of the armed conflict expose them and their families to multiple forms of violence, particularly from criminal groups.

Furthermore, the IACHR has observed that armed actors find the leadership of organizations dedicated to the defense of women's rights as an obstacle to their control over territory and communities. As a result, members of organizations advocating for the protection of women's rights, along with their families, have been and continue to be victims of systematic intimidation, persecution, abduction, torture, and sexual violence, among other crimes. In this regard, the IACHR has indicated that the State must legitimize and protect the actions of these organizations - given the importance of the work they do -, represent the interests of women in public life, and ensure the provision of key services in areas under the control of armed groups.

Finally, the Commission has also highlighted a series of obstacles - of a legislative, institutional, cultural, and geographical nature, among others - that women, girls, and adolescents face in accessing justice when they are victims of violence in the context of an armed conflict or dictatorship, resulting in high rates of impunity. In this regard,

it has emphasized that fundamental elements of access to justice include the incorporation of the gender perspective in a cross-cutting manner and compliance with the duty of strict due diligence in investigating the facts, prosecuting, and punishing those responsible. Moreover, given the complexity of transitional contexts, the duty of due diligence requires that the context of systematic, widespread violence in which violence occurs be taken into consideration. Doing so allows States to identify and dismantle the structures that facilitated such violations, rather than limiting themselves to punishing the immediate perpetrators.

Accordingly, in light of the duty of due diligence with a gender perspective, the IACHR has urged States in the region to investigate, prosecute, and punish violence against women in contexts of conflict or dictatorship, especially sexual and reproductive violence, as serious human rights violations and not as collateral or minor issues. Prioritizing investigations into sexual violence and making these proactive and specific exposes the discriminatory cultural patterns that give rise to such violence, while also making the scale and systematic nature of these events visible. It also leads to the collective reflection needed to bring about structural transformations.

5) LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIRST 25 YEARS

a) Achievements

Since the adoption of the resolution, the WPS agenda has fundamentally reshaped how the international community views the role of women in conflict and peacebuilding. For too long, women were viewed primarily as victims of conflict, their experiences and contributions marginalized in formal peace processes.[39] UNSCR 1325, and the subsequent WPS agenda, changed this paradigm by recognizing that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women.[40]

As we mark a quarter-century since this foundational moment, it is essential to reflect on the progress made, both in global policy and on the ground, where women have often been at the forefront of this transformative change. Over the past 25 years, UNSCR 1325 has led to the creation of global and national policy frameworks, increased political and financial support for women's peacebuilding efforts, and meaningful—though uneven—gender mainstreaming in peace and security institutions.

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[39] Catherine O'Rourke. (2013). *Gender Politics in the Peace Process.* Cambridge University Press.

[40] UN Women. (2015). *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights.* https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/POWW-2015-2016-en.pdf

b) Recognition of women as peace and security actors

Perhaps the most pivotal achievement of the WPS agenda lies in its recognition of women as indispensable actors in peace and security. For decades, the international community's approach to conflict was defined by a narrow, state-centric perspective. Women were largely invisible in this framework, only acknowledged in the context of humanitarian aid or as passive victims of violence.[41] Peace and security were considered the domain of male leaders, combatants, peacekeepers and diplomats.

UNSCR 1325 was the first Security Council resolution to simultaneously recognize the unique and disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls, while also recognizing the critical role women play in preventing and resolving conflicts, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction.[42] This reframing shifted the narrative from "women-as-victims" to "women-as-actors".[43] By doing so, the Resolution spelled out a strengthened framework for understanding peace and security and for empowering women to assume their equal place in it. It shifted the focus from a militaristic view of state security to a more holistic concept of human security, which prioritizes the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

This reframing also provided a powerful legal and political mandate for women's organizations and peacebuilders to advocate for their inclusion at every level of decision-making. No longer could they be dismissed as a side issue; their participation was reasserted as a strategic imperative for durable peace. This shift in perspective empowered countless women to demand a seat at the table, to formalize their informal peacebuilding efforts, and to hold governments and international bodies accountable for their commitments.[44] The resolution itself became a foundational tool for women's advocacy in peace and security, giving a voice to those who had long been marginalized.

c) Development of global achievements and normative frameworks

The adoption of UNSCR 1325 was not a solitary event; it has been followed by nine subsequent resolutions, including 1820 (on conflict-related sexual violence), 1888 (on accountability), and 2122 (on participation and leadership).[45] This comprehensive

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[41] Andrew Sherriff & Karen Barnes. (2008). Enhancing the EU Response to Woman and Armed Conflict With particular reference to development policy. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200805/20080507ATT28495/20080507ATT28495EN.pdf

[42] UN Women. (2015). A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf

[43] Ibid

[44] International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN). (2014). *Women, Peace and Security: A Policy Agenda*. https://icanpeacework.org/

[45] UN Women. (2024, October 18). Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security. https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security

suite of resolutions has established a clear and legally binding mandate for States to prioritize women's roles in peace and security. This framework has normalized the concept of a gender perspective in security policy, moving it from a niche topic to an essential consideration for all international actors, including militaries, police forces, and diplomatic bodies.[46]

Beyond the normative realm, the WPS agenda has spurred tangible institutional and policy changes. The creation of UN Women and the appointment of gender advisors to peacekeeping missions are prime examples of this institutionalization.[47] The agenda has also driven a significant increase in the representation of women in uniformed roles. Between 2018 and 2024, the share of military women in United Nations peacekeeping operations doubled, and women now make up a significant percentage of police and justice personnel in these missions.[48] This increased presence not only provides role models but also improves operational effectiveness, as female peacekeepers are often better able to engage with local communities and address the unique security concerns of women and girls. India, for example, deployed an all-female formed police unit to the UN Mission in Liberia, which contributed to the communities they engaged with to positively view the idea of women having careers.[49]

d) National Action Plans

Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, NAPs have become the cornerstone for translating the WPS agenda into concrete actions at the national level. As of 2025, over 100 countries have developed NAPs, which serve as strategic frameworks towards the full implementation of UNSCR 1325's provisions related to women's participation in peace processes, protection from violence, and gender-responsive approaches in conflict and post-conflict settings.[50] These plans set clear targets, establish monitoring mechanisms, and allocate resources for advancing gender equality in peace and security. There are a number of good practices from national action plans from around the World. Sweden for example, allocates substantial resources to support the participation of women in peace processes, including funding for women-led

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[46] UN Women. (2015). A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf

[47] UN Women. (2015). *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights.* https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/POWW-2015-2016-en.pdf

[48] UN Women. (2023). *UN Peacekeeping: Women's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations.* https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/10/un-peacekeeping-womens-participation-in-peacekeeping-operations

[49] UN 'Gender Mainstreaming in Peacekeeping Operations Liberia 2003 – 2009-Best Practices Report' United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), office of the Gender Advisor 2010

[50] UN Women. (2023). *National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security.* https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/national-action-plans

organizations in conflict zones.[51] Sweden's NAP also includes rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which assess both the progress of implementation and the impact of initiatives on women's security and participation.[52]

Nigeria's NAP, emphasizes women's inclusion in peacebuilding efforts and decision-making at all levels, from local community dialogues to national policy discussions.[53] Colombia's NAP focuses on ensuring women's representation in peace negotiations, as well as their involvement in post-conflict transitional justice processes.[54] Finally, Canada's NAP focuses on the training of peacekeepers and military personnel in gender sensitivity, ensuring that Canada's contribution to international peace operations is fully aligned with the WPS agenda.[55]

e) Increased funding and support for women peacebuilders

Over the past two decades, the global community has increasingly recognized that rhetorical support for the WPS agenda must be paired with tangible, financial commitments to create meaningful change.[56] Women peacebuilders—especially those working at the grassroots level—have long been essential in conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstructions. Whereas funding gaps are still persistent, there is a nascent, positive shift in this landscape, with donor States and multilateral organizations beginning to translate policy into financial support. This momentum signals a critical move beyond performative endorsement to genuine investment, allowing local women's organizations to secure more predictable and flexible resources.

f) Key developments in funding and support

i) UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

One of the most notable funding mechanisms in support of women peacebuilders is the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). Established in 2016, the WPHF is designed to provide flexible, fast-tracked funding to women's groups and women-led organizations operating in fragile, conflict, and post-conflict settings.[57] As

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[51] Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. (2016). *Sweden's National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2016-2020).* https://www.government.se/contentassets/8ae23198463f49269e25a14d4d14b9bc/women-peace-and-security-eng.pdf

[52] Ibid

[53] Ibid

[54] ABColombia. (2024). International Women's Day 2024: update on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the NAP. https://www.abcolombia.org.uk/international-womens-day-2024-update-on-the-implementation-of-unscr-1325-and-the-nap/

[55] Ibid

[56] UN Women. (2015). *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights.* https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/POWW-2015-2016-en.pdf

[57] https://wphfund.org/

of 2025, the WPHF has mobilized millions of dollars for over 40 countries, funding initiatives that support gender-responsive peacebuilding and promote women's participation in decision-making and peace processes.[58] The fund has been a key source of financial support for local women's organizations working to prevent conflict, combat gender-based violence, and support the recovery of communities affected by war and displacement. In countries like Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan, the WPHF has provided financial support to local women's organizations that work to mobilize women to engage in peacebuilding activities, facilitate community dialogues, and address the specific needs of women and girls in conflict zones.[59]

ii) Feminist Foreign Policy and International Assistance Policies

The advent of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) marks a significant evolution in international affairs, moving beyond rhetorical support for gender equality to concrete, financially underpinned commitments. Since Sweden's pioneering adoption in 2014, the movement has expanded significantly, compelling a greater focus on funding and transformative international assistance.[60] The number of States publicly embracing the FFP framework continues to grow, signifying a global trend to embed feminist principles—Rights, Representation, and Resources—across all diplomatic and security engagement. As of 2025 the cohort of countries that have published an FFP or formally committed to the framework includes Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, Scotland, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Liberia, Libya, Slovenia, Mongolia and others.[61] This expansion, particularly with the inclusion of Global South nations like Mexico, Chile, and Colombia, underscores a rising, diversified commitment to addressing structural gender inequalities globally.

The FFP agenda is intrinsically linked to the WPS agenda, often serving as the institutional mechanism for its implementation. Countries like Colombia and Germany are explicitly leveraging FFP to champion a feminist way of peacebuilding by ensuring the integration of gender analysis and the direct channelling of resources to local women peacebuilders and women's rights organizations (WROs) working in crisis settings.[62] Furthermore, collaborative initiatives, such as the Feminist Foreign Policy Plus (FFP+) Group which is co-chaired by countries like Chile and Germany,

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[58] Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund. (2023). *Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund: Annual Report 2023.* https://wphfund.org/annual-report-2023/

[59] Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund. (2022). *Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund: Annual Report 2022.* https://wphfund.org/annual-report-2022/

[60] Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (2024). Feminist Foreign Policy in Action. https://brussels.fes.de/e/feminist-foreign-policy-in-action.html

[61] Katy M Whipney et al (2025). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy 2025 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/637d4cec8d2cf97e81431a25/t/68f57777cbd09b35c20cb76b/1760917367279/FFPC_Rpt-2025_Summary_f01.pdf

[62] Global Public Policy Institute. (2023). Building Peace, the Feminist Foreign Policy Way: Good Practices. https://gppi.net/2023/08/01/feminist-foreign-policy

establish vital multilateral platforms for States and civil society to coordinate and collectively advocate for the robust implementation of gender equality policies.[63]

A core pillar of FFP is the explicit commitment of adequate financial resources through Official Development Assistance (ODA). These commitments are crucial for shifting power dynamics and directly addressing the systemic underfunding of WROs and feminist movements, which often receive less than 1% of global gender-focused aid.[64] Key commitments translating FFP rhetoric into tangible assistance include Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). To mark the 2025 International Women's Day, Canada announced a total contribution of $193.45 million to continue funding 20 new projects aimed at advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls globally, in line with its Feminist International Assistance Policy.[65] Another example is France's Diplomatic Strategy which pledged to reach 50% of its total development assistance as gender-focused aid by 2022, a significant increase from a 30% baseline in 2018. Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy also committed to reaching full employment parity within its Foreign Service and applying a rigorous gender lens to every foreign policy position, resolution, and mandate by 2024, demonstrating an institutional and financial shift in resource allocation.[66] A 2025 Report indicates that Mexico has taken numerous steps to promote more female ambassadors, ministers and deputy ministers in their diplomatic ranks.[67] These policy commitments illustrate a fundamental recognition: that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without dedicated, flexible funding that empowers grassroots women peacebuilders to fulfil their essential roles in conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction.

iii) The Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI)

Launched by UN Women in collaboration with Norway, the Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) aims to address gaps in financing for women's organizations in conflict and post-conflict settings.[68] The instrument is intended to scale up funding for women's rights organizations and feminist movements that often face challenges

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[63] International Peace Institute. (2024). Advancing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Multilateral System: Key Debates and Challenges. https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2403_Advancing-Feminist-Foreign-Policyweb.pdf

[64] International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). (2020). Feminist Foreign Policy in Practice: A Comparative Analysis. https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Comparative-analysis-of-feminist-foreign-policies.pdf

[65] Government of Canada (2025). Canada announces international assistance to continue to advance gender equality globally. https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2025/03/canada-announces-international-assistance-to-continue-to-advance-gender-equality-globally.html

[66] International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). (2020). Feminist Foreign Policy in Practice: A Comparative Analysis. https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Comparative-analysis-of-feminist-foreign-policies.pdf

[67] Katy M Whipney et al (2025). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy 2025 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/637d4cec8d2cf97e81431a25/t/68f57777cbd09b35c20cb76b/1760917367279/FFPC_Rpt-2025_Summary_f01.pdf

[68] Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. (2016). https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/GAI_2Pager.pdf

accessing financing from mainstream donor channels.[69] The GAI allows donor countries, philanthropic organizations, and UN agencies to pool their resources in order to provide targeted financial support to grassroots women-led organizations working on the frontlines of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In Colombia, the GAI has supported women's community-led initiatives that seek to heal communities impacted by decades of armed conflict.[70]

g) Gender Mainstreaming in Peace and Security Institutions

As the WPS agenda continues to evolve, gender mainstreaming has become a central strategy for ensuring that gender perspectives are incorporated across peacekeeping operations, military training, and civilian conflict prevention strategies.[71] Gender mainstreaming in peace and security refers to the integration of gender equality considerations into all policies, programs, and practices, ensuring that the different needs and roles of women and men are addressed in peace and security efforts. This process is crucial not only for protecting women and girls in conflict but also for ensuring their active participation in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and decision-making processes. The following are examples of Gender Mainstreaming in Peace and Security Institutions.

i) United Nations Peacekeeping

UN Peacekeeping has made significant strides in integrating gender perspectives into its operations, both in terms of policy development and personnel inclusion. Gender mainstreaming has been operationalized across several UN peacekeeping missions, with an emphasis on inclusive decision-making and protection of women and girls.[72] One of the most notable changes in recent years has been the increase in the number of women in senior leadership roles within UN peacekeeping operations. In 2023, 22% of all UN military peacekeepers were women, a significant increase from under 5% in the early 2000s.[73] This increase reflects a broader effort to ensure that women are involved not only in peacebuilding but also in operational and strategic decision-

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[69] UN Women. (2016). New global funding instrument invests in women to accelerate conflict recovery, sustain peace. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/2/global-acceleration-instrument-launch

[70] UN Women. (2017). Gender and the role of women in Colombia's peace process. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/2/gender-and-the-role-of-women-in-colombias-peace-process

[71] UN Women. (2024, October 18). Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security. https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security

[72] UN Peacekeeping. Women, Peace and Security. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security-0#:~:text=All%20multidimensional%20UN%20peacekeeping%20missions,with%20women's%20civil%20society%20organizations.

[73] UN Peacekeeping. Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/uniformed-gender-parity-strategy-2018-2018-full-text#:~:text=This%20Strategy%20covers%20the%20period,Women%20Justice%20and%20Corrections%20Officers.

making. UN peacekeeping mandates now often include provisions for gender-responsive strategies, such as addressing sexual violence in conflict, ensuring women's participation in peace talks, and integrating gender-sensitive provisions into the post-conflict reconstruction process.[74]

The United Nations Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace policy brief supports the enhanced use of Special Political Missions (SPMs) as a central tool for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. SPMs are increasingly attractive to both the UN and the AU as they offer a more flexible, non-military alternative amid mounting pushback against traditional, large-scale multilateral military interventions.[75] This is evidenced by high-profile demands for withdrawal, such as the expulsion of UN peacekeepers from Mali and sustained calls from governments and citizens for peacekeepers to leave the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia.[76] Today, the UN and AU deploy these missions across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Europe, focusing on political mediation and peacebuilding.[77] Within this shift, a core objective is the rigorous gender mainstreaming of SPMs, which involves achieving gender parity within mission staffing and building dedicated gender expertise and infrastructure to ensure conflict analysis is gender-responsive. Recent evidence, particularly concerning positions and structural commitments created within the AU's missions, points to significant hope that SPMs are committed to genuinely integrating a gender-sensitive approach.[78]

ii) European Union Missions

The European Union (EU) has been a frontrunner in embedding gender perspectives within its peace and security initiatives. EU missions such as EULEX Kosovo (EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo)[79] and EUTM Mali (EU Training Mission in Mali)[80] have pioneered the inclusion of gender advisors and gender-sensitive programming in their mandates. In both EULEX Kosovo and EUTM Mali, gender advisors are embedded in mission leadership to advise on integrating gender considerations in all

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[74] UN Women. (2015). A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf

[75] International Peace Institute & The Global Observatory. (2023). The WPS Agenda and Special Political Missions: A Glance at Global and Regional Progress. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/10/the-wps-agenda-and-special-political-missions-a-glance-at-global-and-regional-progress/

[76] Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2023). Africa isn't ready for a withdrawal of peacekeepers. https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-isnt-ready-for-a-withdrawal-of-peacekeepers

[77] International Peace Institute & The Global Observatory. (2023). The WPS Agenda and Special Political Missions: A Glance at Global and Regional Progress. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/10/the-wps-agenda-and-special-political-missions-a-glance-at-global-and-regional-progress/

[78] Ibid.

[79] https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/

[80] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eutm-mali/eutm-mali-european-union-training-mission-mali-military-mission_und_en

operational aspects, including disarmament, demobilization, reintegration programs, security sector reform, and humanitarian responses.[81] These missions have mandated gender-sensitive programming to ensure that women's needs are addressed in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. This includes supporting survivors of sexual violence, promoting women's leadership in peace processes, and integrating gender equality into training for local security forces.

iii) African Union Peacekeeping Missions

The African Union (AU) has also made significant progress in embedding gender perspectives in its peace and security operations. Gender mainstreaming is becoming a central feature of the AU's peacekeeping missions, with efforts to enhance the role of women both in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The AU has integrated gender focal points and gender advisors into its peace support operations, such as those in Somalia, Burundi, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Comoros, to ensure that gender-sensitive approaches are included in the planning and implementation of peacekeeping operations.[82] The AU has also worked to increase the representation of women in its peace and security structures, including in the African Standby Force (ASF) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).[83] On 13 March 2017, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) endorsed the modalities for FemWise-Africa and additional endorsement was given to FemWise-Africa by the UN Security Council on 27 March 2017 in New York as part of an Arria Formula meeting. Lastly, *FemWiseAfrica* was officially established through a decision of the AU Assembly of Heads of State (AU Summit) on 4 July 2017.[84]

6) LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES

a) Evolving Nature of Conflicts and Emerging Threats

The changing nature of armed conflict, as well as the increased weaponization of technology (e.g. AI-enabled cyber-attacks, AI-assisted targeting, and warfare tactics), as well as the proliferation of climate emergencies and cybercrime are exacerbating the challenges in the face of the WPS Agenda that include: Further restricting civic space for women; increasing the digital gender divide, and increasing the exclusion of women from decision-making in conflict.

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[81] https://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/; https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eutm-mali/eutm-mali-european-union-training-mission-mali-military-mission_und_en

[82] African Union. (2023). Report on the Implementation of the Women, Peace & Security Agenda in Africa 2020. https://au.int/en/documents/20230203/report-implementation-women-peace-security-agenda-africa-2020

[83] African Union. Women, Peace and Security. https://www.aupaps.org/en/page/80-women-gender-peace-and-security-1

[84] Strengthening African Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention, Mediation Processes and Peace Stabilisation Efforts, Operationalisation of "FemWise-Africa" Implementation Period: 2018-2020 https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-concept-note-femwise-sept-15-short-version-clean-4-flyer.pdf

b) Normative Gaps and Impunity in Addressing Conflict-Related Violence, including sexual violence

Despite progress, gaps remain in legal frameworks, such as impunity for war crimes, exclusion of women from legal remedies or reparation regimes as well as lack of their inclusion in post conflict recovery measures, and lack of recognition for moral and transgenerational damage. A singular focus on sexual violence risks reinforcing victimhood narratives and obscuring women's agency in peacebuilding, governance and leadership.

One of the stark examples of widespread impunity for sexual violence committed in the context of conflict is **continued occurrence of sexual violence by peacekeepers and humanitarian actors**. Over the past decades, the United Nations has undertaken many reforms to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse, from adopting a zero-tolerance policy to putting victims' rights and dignity at the centre of all responses. Despite this significant progress, child sexual abuse cases continue to persist in peacekeeping and humanitarian contexts." (A/HRC/58/52, para 68).

c) Limited Funding for the implementation of the NAPs

One of the most persistent and widely recognized limitations of the WPS Agenda is the chronic lack of adequate and sustainable funding. Despite the strong political commitments enshrined in UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions, the financial resources needed to realize these commitments have consistently fallen short. The 2024 Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security underscores this challenge, noting that support for the agenda often takes the form of small-scale and fragmented projects that struggle to achieve long-term impact, and in many contexts, resources for implementation either never materialize or quickly dwindle when priorities shift.[85]

The financing gap is particularly visible in the implementation of NAPs. While the number of countries adopting WPS NAPs has grown significantly, reaching over 110 by 2024, the majority of these plans still lack allocated or transparent budgets.[86] According to UN Women, only about one-quarter of all adopted NAPs include any form of dedicated budget, and even fewer specify concrete funding mechanisms to ensure delivery.[87] According to PeaceWomen, of the 98 UN Member States that have adopted at least one NAP on Women, Peace and Security, only 36 percent included a

[85] United Nations. (2024) 'Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security, S/2024/xxx. https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15463.doc.htm

[86] Our Secure Future. (2024) 'Where's the Money? Exploring Budget Gaps in WPS Initiatives', https://oursecurefuture.org/our-secure-future/news/wheres-money-exploring-budget-gaps-women-peace-and-security-initiatives

[87] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (2020) 'Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region' https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf

dedicated budget for its implementation, highlighting a significant gap between rhetorical commitments and tangible resource allocation.[88]

Even in countries that demonstrate leadership on gender and peacebuilding, such as Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands, WPS NAPs have been criticized for lacking clear and transparent financial commitments.[89] Other States, including the United Kingdom, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Jordan, have begun to include budgets in their NAPs, but these efforts remain inconsistent and often insufficient.[90]

At the multilateral level, the financing shortfall is equally stark. The WPHF, one of the few mechanisms dedicated to resourcing women's organizations in fragile and conflict-affected settings, mobilized a record $63.5 million in 2024 to support nearly 600 women-led organizations across 34 countries.[91] While this represents a significant achievement, the scale of the mobilized funds remains modest compared to the magnitude of global needs. A 2024 WPHF survey revealed that 46% of women's civil society organizations are at high risk of closure due to funding shortages, with 69% reporting that they could not survive more than six months without external support.[92] The rigidity of donor structures and lengthy application processes further restricts many local actors from accessing much-needed funds.[93]

This gap between rhetoric and resources reflects a broader global pattern in financing for gender equality. Despite repeated commitments by States and the United Nations system to allocate at least 15% of peacebuilding funds to gender equality, actual practice lags.[94] While aid marked for gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected States rose after 2013, the share of assistance with gender equality as its main goal remains small. According to the OECD, only about 11% of aid to fragile contexts in 2018 had gender equality as its primary objective,[95] and the OECD found that in 2018–2019 this dropped to just 5.6%.[96] The OECD also reported that, across all aid globally, only 4% of funding in 2021–2022 focused mainly on gender equality. The rest

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[88] PeaceWomen, 'Analysis of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans'. https://www.peacewomen.org/e-news/article/our-monitoring-national-action-plans

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), 'Annual Report 2024'. https://wphfund.org/annualreport2024/

[92] WPHF. (2024) 'Global CSO Survey Findings on WPS and Humanitarian Action', 2024. https://wphfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/WPHF-2024-CSO-Survey-Findings_April-30-2025_FIN-1.pdf

[93] Ibid

[94] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Financing-for-gender-equality-and-the-implementation-of-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-en.pdf

[95] OECD (2020), *States of Fragility and Official Development Assistance*, *https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/states-of-fragility-and-official-development-assistance_44bbde61-en.html*

[96] OECD (2021), *Gender Equality and Fragility: Key Trends and Statistics*, *https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/07/gender-equality-and-fragility_8f6ca305/3a93832b-en.pdf*

treated it as a secondary concern. Funding for gender equality within the peace and security sector continues to make up only a very small share.[97]

Another challenge that exacerbates the funding gap in the WPS agenda is the disproportionate allocation of government budgets to military expenditures at the expense of social and gender equality priorities. Over 100 countries around the world have reportedly raised their military spending. World military expenditure exceeded USD 2.7 trillion – representing an increase of 9.4 per cent in real terms from 2023.[98]

Despite repeated commitments by States to advance gender equality and support inclusive peacebuilding, WPS-related programming is often sidelined as resources are redirected toward military spending. While increases in security measures may be necessary in times of conflict, the broader militarisation of society that follows can shift attention and resources away from long-term human security, limiting efforts to empower women as agents of peace. UN Women and civil society advocates have consistently argued that the diversion of scarce resources away from gender-responsive peacebuilding contributes directly to the stagnation of the WPS agenda.[99] As a result, while billions are poured annually into military institutions, women's organizations on the frontlines of conflict and recovery continue to struggle for survival, with many reporting imminent risk of closure due to lack of funding.[100]

The underfunding of the WPS agenda has therefore emerged as one of the most serious and persistent obstacles to implementation over the past 25 years. The scarcity of funds for WPS is not an isolated phenomenon but part of the broader, systemic global underinvestment in gender equality. This persistent gap undermines not only the sustainability of peace processes but also the credibility of international commitments to women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings.[101]

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[97] OECD (2024), *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024 OECD (2024), Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024, 29 November 2024*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-finance-for-gender-equality-2024_e340afbf-en.html

[98] Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on WPS 2025, S/2025/556, https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/report/united-nations-security-council-women-and-peace-and-security-report-of-the-secretary-general/n2523645-1.pdf

[99] UN Women. (2022) *Financing for Gender Equality in Humanitarian and Conflict Settings*, https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/03/financing-for-gender-equality-in-humanitarian-and-conflict-settings

[100] Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). (2024) *Global CSO Survey Findings on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action*, https://wphfund.org/resources/wphf-global-cso-survey-findings-on-women-peace-and-security-and-humanitarian-action/

[101] UN Women. 'Women, Peace and Security: Financing the Agenda' (2015 Global Study). https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/CH13.pdf

d) Insufficient resources for women human rights defenders and organizations in conflict settings

Women organizations and HRDs continue to suffer from serious funding shortages. Only 0.3 per cent of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts is directed at feminist, women-led, and women's rights organizations and movements;[102] while the Secretary-General of the United Nations continues to report annual record-breaking global military expenditures with the latest high in 2023 of $2.44 trillion.[103] Seventy-two percent of women's rights organisations have laid off staff due to the recent global aid funding reductions, and 90% of women's organisations have been financially impacted.[104] Approximately 47% of women's rights organisations may shut down within six months, and 51% of these organisations have suspended life-saving programmes.[105]

e) Underrepresentation of Women

Another persistent limitation of the WPS Agenda, even as it marks its 25th anniversary, is the underrepresentation of women in formal peace and political processes. Despite decades of advocacy and multiple commitments under UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, women continue to be excluded from decision-making spaces that directly affect the prospects for peace.

A study analyzing 116 comprehensive peace agreements finalized between 1990 and 2021 found that while women's involvement in peace negotiations is positively correlated with the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in the agreements, this correlation is contingent upon women holding positions of power.[106] Simply having women present at the negotiation table is insufficient; their substantive participation and decision-making authority are crucial for the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions.

Moreover, research by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) indicates that despite the critical roles women play, they continue to be largely excluded from peace processes. In 2023, women made up only 5% of

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[102] S/2024/671, para. 8.

[103] S/2024/671, para. 51.

[104] at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide-en.pdf

[105] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/05/new-survey-shows-half-of-womens-organizations-aiding-women-in-crises-may-shut-down-in-six-months-due-to-global-aid-cuts

[106] Elizabeth Good. (2024) "Power Over Presence: Women's Representation in Comprehensive Peace Negotiations and Gender Provision Outcomes," American Political Science Review, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/power-over-presence-womens-representation-in-comprehensive-peace-negotiations-and-gender-provision-outcomes/BF6C310AB2A66AE34A8B0BCD75B75116

negotiators, 9% of mediators, and 19% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements.

The 2025 Report of the Secretary- General on WPS indicates that as the space for inclusive and comprehensive peace and political processes shrinks, there are fewer opportunities and entry points for women to access and influence official level of talks. The report cites the example of women being entirely excluded from official ceasefire negotiation delegations in Yemen and Libya.[107]

The exclusion of women has also been indicated to be evident in Sudan, where women remained absent from the diplomatic initiatives launched in response to the outbreak of the conflict in 2023, including negotiations convened at the regional and international levels in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.[108] Similarly, in the Middle East, even before the escalation of war in Gaza, women had been largely sidelined from political negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The ceasefire talks following the attack of 7 October 2023 continued this trend, again excluding women from meaningful participation.[109] In Ethiopia, women were absent from the negotiating teams during the 2022 Pretoria agreement addressing the Tigray conflict.[110] In Myanmar, formal peace negotiations conducted under the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement systematically excluded women from delegations. During the 1995 Dayton Accords, which formally ended the conflict in Bosnia, women were completely absent from the negotiating table.[111]

This persistent underrepresentation demonstrates a fundamental shortcoming in the WPS agenda's implementation. While normative commitments to women's inclusion have been widely embraced over the past 25 years, practice on the ground lags. Research consistently shows that peace processes that meaningfully include women are more likely to succeed and endure, yet their systematic exclusion continues to undermine the prospects of sustainable peace.[112] The underrepresentation of women, even after a quarter century of the WPS agenda, illustrates how deeply entrenched gender inequality remains in peace and security structures, and signals the need for

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[107] United Nations. (2025) 'Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security, https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/report/united-nations-security-council-women-and-peace-and-security-report-of-the-secretary-general/n2523645-1.pdf.

[108] Ibid

[109] United Nations. (2024)Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security, and Security Council debates. https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/wps

[110] https://orionpolicy.org/women-and-the-path-for-peace-in-africa-ethiopia/

[111]https://academic.oup.com/isq/article/63/3/668/5519527#:~:text=The%20Swedish%20international%20NGO%2C%20Kvinna%20till%20Kvinna,the%20regional%20negotiating%20teams%20(Lithander%202000%2C%2020).

[112] UN Women. (2024) 'Facts and Figures: Women, Peace and Security' https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security

stronger accountability mechanisms and enforcement of commitments to women's participation.

f) Lack of Implementation at the national level

Despite the adoption of NAPs in over 110 countries to implement Resolution 1325, a significant gap persists between policy formulation and actual execution. Many States invest substantial resources in designing these plans, yet they often fail to translate them into actionable outcomes. This discrepancy arises from institutional inertia, limited political will, and insufficient integration of gender perspectives into national security frameworks.[113] Additionally, there is limited engagement with civil society organisations and women's groups involved in peacebuilding and conflict management. According to *PeaceWomen*, of the 79 NAPs analysed globally, only 34 included a dedicated budget, and many of those received far less funding than requested.[114]

National security structures, even in countries with well-developed NAPs, present formidable obstacles to women's full participation in peace and security efforts. Patriarchal norms, resistance to organizational change, and the lack of gender-sensitive training programs limit women's opportunities to take on leadership roles in military and peacekeeping operations. Research conducted by the Inclusive Security highlights that military cultures that fail to integrate gender perspectives consistently marginalize women, reducing both the effectiveness of peace operations and the potential for women to influence policy.[115]

Moreover, the protection of civilians (PoC) in peacekeeping operations requires a gender lens that moves beyond viewing women as passive victims. Incorporating WPS principles into PoC strategies ensures that women are recognized as agents of change. This approach addresses issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and the effects of climate change on women and girls and allows peacekeeping missions to better safeguard populations in situations of vulnerability while promoting inclusive peacebuilding.[116]

g) Weak Accountability and Monitoring Mechanism

The weakness of accountability and monitoring mechanisms remains one of the most persistent challenges undermining the effective implementation of the WPS Agenda

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[113] Ibid.

[114] PeaceWomen. (2023) *Analysis of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans,* https://www.peacewomen.org.

[115] Inclusive Security, (2022) *Gender Perspectives and Military Effectiveness*, https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/gender-perspectives-and-military-effectiveness

[116] UN Women. (2024) '*Women, Peace and Security: Advancing Implementation*' https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024

over its 25-year history. The Security Council has yet to formally endorse specific WPS indicators, making it challenging to track compliance and hold States accountable for the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes.[117]

Research indicates that even when NAPs are implemented, the absence of standardized indicators and monitoring results in inconsistent reporting and makes domestic assessments and cross-country comparisons difficult. For example, UN Women's 2024 global review of NAP implementation found that less than one-third of countries report on measurable outcomes, and only a fraction include budget allocation, participation metrics, or impact assessments in their monitoring frameworks.[118] Civil society monitoring further highlights that in many contexts, reporting mechanisms remain superficial, often focusing on activities rather than substantive changes in women's participation or protection from gender-based violence.[119]

The lack of rigorous accountability structures also impacts resource allocation. Without verified evidence of progress, donor States, development partners and institutions may underfund or deprioritize WPS programs, perpetuating the persistent funding gaps that have hindered long-term sustainability. Strengthening accountability requires the Security Council and UN entities to endorse standardized indicators, enforce regular reporting, and support independent monitoring by civil society and multilateral actors. The African Union offers a notable example, having established indicators aligned with the WPS pillars of UNSCR 1325 within its Continental Results Framework to measure progress on prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. Implementing these measures would not only improve transparency but also enhance the credibility of WPS commitments and ensure that women are genuinely included as agents of change rather than symbolic participants.

h) Disproportionate impacts of climate change and sanctions

Climate change intensifies GBV risks (e.g., child marriage) and fuels conflict and displacement. Unilateral sanctions have far-reaching human rights implications, disproportionately affecting women, children, and vulnerable groups by obstructing development and exacerbating poverty. Together, these intersecting crises erode

[117] United Nations. (2024) *Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security'* https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc25463.doc.htm

[118] UN Women. (2024) *Women, Peace and Security: Global Review of National Action Plans*' https://wps.unwomen.org/resources/fact-sheets

[119] PeaceWomen. (2023) *Monitoring National Action Plans: Civil Society Perspectives*' https://www.peacewomen.org

already fragile systems of care, limit access to health and education, and increase women's unpaid labor burdens.

In humanitarian and conflict settings, restrictions on financial flows and humanitarian exemptions often delay or block the delivery of essential goods, from food and medicine to reproductive health supplies; with serious consequences for women and girls. The combined effects of climate disruption and coercive economic measures reinforce cycles of dependency and deprivation, undermining gender equality and the realization of women's human rights

i) The inconsistent enforcement in arms control and Disarmament

Fragmented regulations and inconsistent enforcement facilitate the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons, disproportionately affecting women through increased vulnerability to SGBV and barriers to political participation. Fewer than one-quarter of national action plans on WPS include references to disarmament and arms control.

j) Expanding the WPS Agenda to address specific realities

In some regions of the World, such as the Americas, women and girls are exposed to large-scale contexts of violence by organized criminal groups. This form of violence must be recognized within an expanded WPS agenda. This phenomenon, visible on a large scale in the Northern Triangle of Central America, Colombia, Mexico, Haiti, Venezuela, Brazil, and Paraguay, and in smaller territories across Latin America, has generated systematic patterns of gender-based violence. These include femicides, sexual slavery, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and intimate partner violence, all reinforced by harmful stereotypes and "narco-cultures" Scholars identify how narco-culture 'deepens gender inequality and violence' by embedding patriarchal conceptions of women as vulnerable, decorative and subordinate.[120]

Massive migration processes, both international and internal, also heighten risks of violence against women and girls. Displacement exposes them to sexual violence, harassment at border crossings, exploitation in refugee or IDP camps, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and femicides.[121]

Extreme poverty and the structural denial of economic, social, and cultural rights constitute another layer of violence. Women and girls in precarious conditions face sexual exploitation, early and forced marriage, sexual exploitation, and obstacles to

[120] Miranda Yanes, María, and Carlos A. Valdés Salas. 2019. "Narco-Culture as a Distortion of Gender Stereotypes: An Aggravating Factor in the Situation of Violence and Conflict in Society." *Revista Iberoamericana de Producción Académica y Gestión Educativa* 6(12). https://portal.amelica.org/ameli/journal/ 716/7163680007 /html

[121] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2024. "Gender-Based Violence." *UNHCR.* https://www.unhcr.org/sexual-and-gender-based-violence.html

escaping domestic violence.[122] These forms of violence, documented in Haiti[123], Venezuela,[124] and across Latin America, show how deprivation itself intersects with gender to deepen vulnerability.

Finally, in several regions, state security forces have also been identified as perpetrators of gender-based violence, using force included sexual violence, threats of rape, degrading treatment, and psychological abuse against women and adolescent girls. This reflects a broader legacy of repressive policing and militarized security approaches, often compounded in territories where state responses overlap with organized criminal control, further victimizing women.[125]

Yet, despite the scale and gravity of these realities, most WPS National Action Plans adopt a limited vision of the agenda, centered primarily on participation in peacekeeping or foreign policy. In the Americas for example, only a small number of States explicitly integrate the prevention of and protection from sexual violence into internal security policies. This gap highlights the urgent need to broaden the WPS framework to encompass the multiple and interrelated contexts in which violence against women is produced and perpetuated.[126]

7) RECOMMENDATIONS

States, the United Nations, and all relevant stakeholders should:

- **Reassert the sanctity and legitimacy of international human rights and humanitarian law governing conflicts and humanitarian settings, particularly those that protect women and girls during conflict; their right to life; safety, dignity, and their full participation in humanitarian responses, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.**

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[122] United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). *Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions: Harmful Practices that Deepen Gender Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Project Documents, LC/TS.2021/186. Santiago: ECLAC, 2022

[123] Haiti: A protection crisis for women and girls." United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 4 August 2023. https://www.unfpa.org/haiti-protection-crisis-women-and-girls

[124] "A Lack of Decent Jobs and the Gender Wage Gap Are Impoverishing Female-Headed Households in Venezuela." *Equal Times*, (date unknown). https://www.equaltimes.org/a-lack-of-decent-jobs-and-the

[125] United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *"Help Us Live With Dignity, Not Just Survive": New UN Report Calls for Scaled-Up Comprehensive Services Amid Unprecedented Levels of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.* Press release, 14 August 2025. https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/help-us-live-with-dignity-not-just-survive-new-un-report-calls-for-scaled-up-comprehensive-services-amid-unprecedented-levels-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence/

[126] *Women, Peace and Security Agenda as a Response to Security Challenges and Threats in Latin America and the Caribbean."* Geneva: WILPF, January 2021. Accessed [date]. https://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/REV.2-Enhancing-Security-Report-Jan-22-21.pdf.

- **Address and counter the growing regression in gender equality and achieve substantive equality, particularly in pre- and post-conflict settings:** De facto equality between women and men, and girls and boys, is foundational to inclusive and sustainable peace. Achieving this requires a commitment to substantive gender equality - transforming elements of society, cultural, political, and economic structures that obstruct equality. Harmful social norms, stereotypes, discrimination, and violence against women and girls must be addressed. Furthermore, the socioeconomic disadvantages of women and girls must be addressed; laws and policies promoting gender equality must be adopted; and legal and structural barriers against them must be eliminated.
- **Link women's economic empowerment and conflict prevention by identifying how financial access and inclusion reduce violence and vulnerability and provide women with the support to stabilize their lives; Establish a Women's Economic Security Fund with dedicated financing mechanisms to provide no-collateral microfinance and business development support for women in low-income and conflict-affected areas:** The Fund should ensure accessible application processes in local languages and simplified formats. It should also integrate economic empowerment into violence prevention strategies, require quotas for women-owned businesses in foreign investment and post-conflict reconstruction, and mainstream prevention programs across all development and sustainable development initiatives.
- **Ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and girls across the life span in all decision-making processes related to peace and security.** Sustainable peace requires the inclusion of women of all ages, backgrounds, and identities—not only as beneficiaries but as active agents shaping prevention, mediation, reconstruction, and governance efforts. States and international actors should adopt measures to remove structural, legal, and cultural barriers to participation; provide resources and capacity-building across generations; and institutionalize women's leadership at every stage of peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.
- **Expand the WPS Agenda with feminist and intersectional lenses: Confront conflicts through an intersectional gender lens rooted in the rule of law, incorporating new emerging threats like AI, climate change, and digital GBV against women and girls.**
- **Prioritize survivor-centric justice:** Root justice systems in survivor-centred principles (dignity, access to care, protection from stigma), with survivor-led approaches, funds, and policies to dismantle cultural stigma. Ensure evidence

collection avoids traumatization, with high information integrity, witness protection, and mental health services.

- **Combat stigma and broaden the access to justice through enhanced advocacy and an improved integration of the contributions of women's, youth-led, grassroots organizations.**
- **Strengthen women's leadership and participation:** Full parity in decision-making for conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding can be achieved by including women in all conflict management stages. Women must also be effectively included in the reforms of the security sector, governance and the judicial sector. Women-led organizations must also enjoy viable financial support.
- **Enhance arms control and disarmament with gender perspectives:** Increased risks to sexual and gender-based violence must be assessed before arms transfers under the Arms Trade Treaty. States that continue to export arms to countries or actors that engage in egregious violations of humanitarian law, particularly against women and girls must be held accountable. Furthermore, the full participation of women in disarmament initiatives must be ensured.
- **Protect women and girls HRDs, peace activists, and students from reprisals and guarantee the space for women and girls HRDs and organizations to continue to advocate for the equal rights of women and girls:** Such right should include their right to fully participate in conflict resolution, as well as access to justice and reparations. To that end, women and girls HRDs and peacebuilders must be protected from all forms of retaliation, harassment, or violence, both online and offline.
- **Increase flexible and rapid funding to women and girls HRDs and women and girls organizations by reducing the lengthy and bureaucratic process, allowing organizations to have ease of access and speed of access to resources for violence prevention, and streamlining the funding mechanisms:** Work with CSOs must be strengthened to establish community oversight committees geared to evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the WPS agenda. Equal weight must be given to the findings of CSOs in the official reports.
- **Ensure that post conflict recovery processes include components related to equal access to comprehensive reproductive health services, including for pregnancies physical and psychological violence resulting from rape.**
- **Integrate WPS with countering violent extremism while avoiding profiling.**

- **Integrate gender perspectives and an emphasis on women's participation in governance, peace and security mechanisms of countries and regional bodies:** Such actions should be based on concrete indicators of country NAPs on 1325. Furthermore, gender- responsive indicators should be integrated in early warning systems and analysts should be capacitated with appropriate skills.
- **Advance Nuclear and Space Disarmament: Recognize gendered effects of nuclear weapons and ensure women's participation in disarmament.**
- **Strengthen gender and equality responsiveness in climate change policies and fora, including through ensuring the full participation of women in climate policymaking under UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.**
- **Preserve historical memory in reparations with gender parity in memorials to recognize women's roles in peacebuilding.**
- **Reaffirm commitment to addressing the root of conflict through gender-responsive early warning systems, preventive diplomacy, and strengthened multilateralism for justice, equality, and peace, including through increased participation of women as mediators.**

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