

**NGO Statement for the 1325 Expert Group Meeting in the lead up to the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security**

**January 15, 2009; Monrovia, Liberia**

We thank the International Steering Committee and the Ministry of Gender and Development of Liberia for this opportunity to present the NGO perspective on the issues of women's participation in peace negotiations and peace processes; and gender-responsive justice and security in this Expert Group Meeting.

We are speaking on behalf of various NGOs and women's groups working around the world for the full and effective implementation Resolution 1325.

**On women's participation in peace negotiations and peace processes**

We would like to highlight the Security Council's intentions regarding women's participation as articulated in Resolution 1325. It stressed "the importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution." The Security Council also recognized that "[women's] protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security;" and it urged "the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes."

In its presidential statement of 29 October 2008 (S/PRST/2008/39), the Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to the full and effective implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security. It expressed concern about "the under-representation of women at all stages of a peace process and in peacebuilding, and recognized the need to facilitate the full and effective participation of women in these areas given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding." It called on "Member States, international, regional and sub-regional organizations to take measures to increase the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and to strengthen the role of women as decision-makers in these areas."

In the open debate to mark the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Resolution 1325 on 29 October 2008 several UN Member States and regional groups including the European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), emphasized the importance of women's participation in peace negotiations.

We welcome regional instruments and efforts such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) which is binding: African Heads of States report annually on the situation of gender equality in their country (article 2) and that of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)'s Protocol on Gender and Development which stipulates that State parties should endeavor to ensure that women have equal representation and participation in public and private decision-making positions by 2015.

At the same time however, we note and share the great concern over the under-representation of women in peace negotiations and peace processes overall. For NGOs, this is not just a matter of how many women are included in peace negotiations but how substantively women are able to participate, and what difference such participation makes. We believe that with women's full and equal participation, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and all peace processes are more likely to succeed. However, women's meaningful engagement in such processes will not happen if we do not focus on creating an enabling environment for it to become a reality. This requires political will and commitment from all stakeholders, particularly on the part of UN Member States.

To ensure women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations and all peace processes, we reiterate the following:

- Mediators, negotiators and donor governments should address the obstacles to women's physical presence and effective participation at the official negotiation table and at any behind-the-scenes negotiations including ensuring adequate resources for women's participation.
- UN Member States, civil society and the UN should work towards building women's capacity in conflict analysis, prevention, mediation, negotiation, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction.
- UN Member States, and regional and international intergovernmental organizations should create institutional mechanisms to systematically monitor women's participation in all levels of peace negotiations.
- Member States should strengthen their national commitments and capacity to implement Resolution 1325, including through national and regional action plans and strategies. National Action Plans should be designed to coordinate and strengthen the implementation of 1325. They should contain a catalogue of measures, clear targets and benchmarks for full implementation by 2015.
- UN Member States, UN agencies, regional and international organizations should recognize and support the informal role that women's groups and NGOs in conflict and post-conflict situations where government and the judicial system is often still quite weak. Women's groups and NGOs

build women's capacity and provide various forms of support to get women at the peace negotiation table.

- Women should persistently continue to pressure and demand that their governments and other international institutions develop national action plans for the implementation of the Resolution 1325.

### **On gender-responsive justice and security**

A gender-responsive justice system is an integral element of effective peace processes and a necessary component of state-building activities in post-conflict situations. When women are able to participate in peace processes, the development of such a system is one of the priority concerns they raise. A gender-responsive justice system helps to break the continuing cycle of violence against women, and ensure their meaningful participation not only in peace negotiations but in rebuilding their communities and in transforming their societies.

However, the lack of adequate and gender-responsive judicial mechanisms to address abuses of women's rights during and after conflict – such as gender-sensitive transitional justice mechanisms (e.g. truth and reconciliation commissions) and the lack of investment in facilities and access for women to post-conflict gender justice remains.

To facilitate the development of gender-responsive justice and security, we recommend that the following actions be pursued:

- UN Member States must increase the number of women in the judiciary and encourage the entry of more women in the legal professions in conflict-affected situations as a means of increasing women's access to justice and ending impunity.
- UN Member States should commit to concrete advancements in the equal inclusion of women in peace talks, justice processes and civilian aspects of peacekeeping.
- UN Member States should work at the national level to reform the judiciary system and services by mainstreaming gender in their knowledge base, and including accountable justice for women and girls. At the international level, strengthen the UN gender equality architecture to ensure accountability to women worldwide.
- UN Member States and civil society should review national constitutions, laws including customary and traditional laws to address discriminatory practices and gaps in order to advance protection of women's and girls' rights.

- UN Member States, civil society, humanitarian organizations, the UN Security Council and relevant UN bodies should work towards the elimination of gender-based violence, and should ensure that victims have full access to justice and that there is no impunity for perpetrators.
- UN Member States, civil society, humanitarian organizations, the UN Security Council and relevant UN bodies should work towards the elimination of gender-based violence, and ensure protection for victims and women's human rights defenders. This also requires full access to justice and guarantee that there is no impunity for perpetrators.
- The Security Council should work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the prosecution of sexual crimes is not included in amnesty provisions in conflict-resolution processes.
- UN Member States, civil society, humanitarian organizations and relevant UN bodies should create mechanisms that would facilitate women's access to judicial structures and enable them to testify without fear of retribution.
- UN Member States - with support from civil society, humanitarian organizations and relevant UN bodies - should convene temporary councils of influential and respected women from conflict-affected communities to mediate disputes and at the same time set examples of women's leadership in peace negotiations.
- Civil society, humanitarian organizations and relevant UN bodies should develop and implement legal literacy programs to enable women to use traditional justice systems and statutory laws to leverage their rights.
- Civil society, should call on the Security Council to refuse to recognize peace processes that exclude women, just as the Council has expressed disapproval of amnesty agreements that violate international law.
- Civil society should call on the Security Council, UN entities and Member States to include women in discussions and decision-making in relation to their security needs and concerns. In particular, women's issues must be included in all aspects of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (DDRRR).

We hope that these concerns and recommendations will be taken into consideration in the development of the Colloquium's Declaration and the follow-up action.

## **Names of organizations**

1. Africa Desk of IFOR/Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)
2. American Refugee Committee
3. Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights
4. Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
5. Center for Peace Education, Miriam College – Philippines
6. Coalition of Political Party Women in Liberia
7. Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (CORDAID)
8. Crusaders for Peace (Liberia)
9. Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE – Costa Rica)
10. femLINKPACIFIC (Media Initiatives for Women)/Coordinator of the Pacific Regional Media Network on UNSCR1325 (Fiji/Pacific)
11. Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS)
12. FOKUS- Forums for Women and Development (Norway)
13. Global Action to Prevent War
14. Global Justice Center
15. Hague Appeal for Peace
16. Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation( ICCO)
17. International Alert
18. International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC)
19. The Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal(IHRICON)
20. La Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas y el Observatorio Género Democracia y Derechos Humanos (Colombia)
21. Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET)
22. NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
23. Peace Boat U.S.
24. Rural Women of Liberia
25. Saathi (Nepal)
26. Solidarite Femmes Parliementaire
27. Southeastern Women’s Development Association (Liberia)
28. Sudanese Women Forum on Peace
29. Sulong CARHRIHL – Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws (Philippines)
30. Union Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (National Union of Guatemalan Women)
31. Women’s Action for New Directions (USA)
32. Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
33. Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET-Liberia)
34. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
35. Women’s Legislative Caucus of Liberia
36. Women’s Media Collective – Sri Lanka
37. Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia
38. Women's Refugee Commission
39. World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) – Women’s International Network