

WIDE Annual Conference

Title Session: Militarism, Security and Peace: 1325 – Challenges and Opportunities in National Action Plans, Peace Palace, The Hague

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A. UNSCR 1325 – What is it about?

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed almost exactly eight years ago, on 31 October 2000.

The Resolution was passed by the Security Council as a result of active lobbying of the international women's movement and other CSOs. Key event was the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which strongly affirmed the need for a Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security. Therefore one can truly say that UNSCR is fully owned by women's groups and civil society.

The Resolution recognizes the disproportionate effects of war and conflict on women, and the fact that women also have an effect on conflict. It stresses the importance of women's role in preventing conflicts, and the need of their full involvement in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

In the light of this, the then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan requested the UN member states to develop National Action Plans, in order to ensure accountability for the implementation of 1325.

B. The Dutch National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

In 2007, the Dutch government, thanks to the support and commitment of the Minister for Development Cooperation, committed itself to paying more attention to the implementation of the Resolution.

This was consolidated in an effort to create a National Action plan on UNSCR 1325. The Netherlands thereby followed in the footsteps of Austria, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Since then, Finland, Iceland and Spain have followed.

What made the Dutch process quite unique is the fact that civil society (incl. NGOs, women's groups, universities) was involved in the formulation of the National Action Plan (NAP). This was first reflected in the Schokland¹ agreement on Women, Peace and security, where the different stakeholders expressed a desire to work together on the NAP.

¹ The Schokland event consisted of a series of agreements between the Dutch government and the public in order to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals.

C. The Process of Formulating the Plan.

In the Netherlands, the process started with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinating the effort, providing civil society actors with a first draft of the plan. A large number of groups decided to work together in order to provide a coherent and thorough response, with the facilitation role being taken on by Dutch Gender Platform WO=MEN.

Representatives from different NGOs and activist groups (including humanitarian aid, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women peace groups, etc) met regularly in order to formulate recommendations and feedback on the Plan. Inputs were then fed back to the Ministry representative, and changes were incorporated.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for co-ordination with two other key governmental actors: The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations.

The Action Plan was finalized and officially launched at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs early December 2007. The NAP formulates action points in five categories:

- 1) The international legal framework;
- 2) Prevention, mediation and reconstruction;
- 3) International co-operation;
- 4) Peace missions;
- 5) Harmonization and coordination.

Since the launch of the Dutch NAP 1325, the nature of the civil society co-operation has changed from a temporary coalition to provide policy inputs; to a more permanent coordination and advocacy body for organisations working on 1325 at different levels of society. It has defined its role as:

- Supporting local (women's) organisations and communicating their interests and needs to the Dutch government;
- Network building between local organisations, South-South and South-North;
- Representing community based needs, through local organisation's expertise or research and monitoring missions;
- Assisting partners organisations to lobby and advocate for the implementation of UNSCR 1325;
- Acting as a partner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing policy inputs as well as independent feedback and monitoring;
- Continuing to advocate the implementation of NAP 1325 and UNSCR 1325 in the Netherlands and European Union.
- Exchange good practices.

The working group meets approximately once per month. Meetings with Dutch government representatives take place twice per year.

D. Challenges met in the course of one year NAP: The SMART Principles

To broaden the scope of the one-year review, challenges met during the implementation of the Dutch NAP are complemented with lessons learned in view of the Danish, UK and Swedish Action Plans. Recommendations formulated by these actors have been incorporated as well.

In terms of preventing any planning from becoming a paper tiger, key principles to be followed to ensure implementation are the **SMART principles**. **SMART** stands for **S**pecific; **M**easurable; **A**chievable; **R**ealistic; and **T**ime-bound.

I would like to look at the NAP Action Planning in the light of these principles, in order to clarify some of the obstacles encountered in its implementation.

1) Specific: “Objectives must be clear and well-defined”

The Dutch Plan identifies many objectives and actions, such as e.g. on page 41:

“Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Defense will press for a greater – and if possible, equal – proportion of women in decision-making positions within international organizations involved in conflict and reconstruction policy”.

However, one critique on the NAP is that the language is relatively weak; with actions not being made concrete enough – **who** will do what (which departments?), by what **time** (review dates?), **how** will it be done (milestones?), with what **means**? The language conveys more of an intention than “hard action”. In short, many NAPs are defined too broadly.

On the other hand, the Dutch plan operates on a “narrow” definition of security as a notion of physical safety and legal security of women and men; excluding wider definitions, e.g. involving socio-economic aspects; such as the safeguarding of women from any form of structural violence such as poverty. Although the Dutch NAP realizes that security is a broader concept, requiring co-operation with a broad range of actors and across various sectors, the plan itself does not aim to address this.

This is partly due to the fact that traditional notions on security still dominate, and the fact that this traditional notion alone covers a wide range of issues (diplomacy, peace missions, reconstruction efforts, etc), making it challenging enough to ensure 1325 is taken on board in every dimension. However, the current “compartmentalized” approach carries the risk that the issue of gender becomes a matter of “addition” to already existing approaches of peace intervention, instead of truly transforming these approaches from a gender perspective – and hence having more impact.

2) Measurable: “Objectives must be formulated in such a way that it is clear when completion is achieved, and progress should be measurable (might mean quantifiable)”

As mentioned above, objectives are often formulated rather weak, and baselines are often insufficient or completely lacking, making it difficult to measure progress along the way of

implementation. In relation to this, effective monitoring and evaluation tools/systems are still lacking.

Some recommendations that stem from countries with a longer history of National Action Plans are:

- A good M & E system needs to be in place first and foremost;
- The Action Plan should be reviewed annually, e.g. around the anniversary of the plan;
- Review moments should provide an opportunity for revision and additions;
- Results of the review need to be made public;

An example of good practice comes from the UK, which created an interdepartmental working group whose first action was to do a gender audit across government departments. This allowed for an assessment of existing practices, and shed light on what still needed to be done. This was followed by the establishment of working groups consisting of both civil society and experts from other governments, in order to provide advice.

3) Achievable: “All stakeholders agree on the objectives/ actions to be undertaken, and are in agreement on the “path” to follow”

Within the Dutch NAP process, there is still lack of clarity on who is responsible for what, and as long as this is not transparent, effective coordination and joint monitoring becomes impossible.

For example, in the UK the different Ministries addressed UNSCR 1325 individually, with varying degrees of success. It was difficult for the different government departments to indicate clearly how much had been done, and on occasion there would be assumptions that another department was already handling certain aspects of the plan.

Also, it is important to keep in mind that views amongst the various stakeholders often differ: A representative from the Ministry of Defense will hold different views than a development specialist; and a large development NGO will hold different views on what needs prioritizing than an activist (and largely volunteer-based) group.

Some recommendations that stem from countries with a longer history of National Action Plans in this regard are:

- Unless there is firm Ministerial backing for the Action Plan, it is hard to make real progress;
- It is important to invest in good coordination between the different stakeholders, although this will be challenging: The topic women/ peace/security is large and complex; policy and field levels often differ in perspectives; and there can be a reluctance to share information due to competition, or to avoid interference. The coordination structure should consist of representatives from the different Ministries (include all relevant directorates), and NGOs. Regular meetings are important, and representatives should strive to be on the same page as much as possible;
- It is crucial to identify focal points amongst the different key stakeholders (in the NGOs as well as government departments), and to provide transparency on who these people are, in order to ensure access and responsibility being taken.

- If progress is still not forthcoming despite all these measures, it is important for civil society to work together, and cooperate with supportive Parliamentarians to keep the different government bodies alert – either by demanding regular meetings to assess progress, or if needed by asking Parliamentary questions.

4) Realistic and 5) Time-bound: “The objectives are achievable within the availability of resources, knowledge, and time”

The Dutch NAP, as other Action Plans, lacks concrete time limits. Neither are financial resources allocated for the implementation of the Plan – funding has proven to be actually one of the largest obstacles to the implementation of the different Action Plans.

Ideally, governmental departments and well as NGOs should take full responsibility for the commitments made. In reality however, gender issues are rarely a high institutional priority, and securing concrete funding often becomes a long battle.

Also (and linked to the above), adequate numbers of staff with sufficient gender knowledge are often lacking amongst the different stakeholders. For example, relevant governmental focal points often change position, and as a result, the systematic and efficient implementation of UNSCR 1325 is interrupted.

Some recommendations that stem from countries with a longer history of National Action Plans in this regard are:

- Start demanding/securing funding commitments during the process of developing the Action Plan;
- Develop joint efforts to raise awareness and political will once the plan is to be implemented;
- Gender budget analysis is a good tool to demonstrate how the implementation of the women/peace/security issue is under-funded (make it tangible!).

E. Some conclusions

- A vigilant civil society is important, to ensure the Action Plan moves beyond becoming a paper tiger;
- Next to operating as a watch dog, civil society is also important in its role of providing support in terms of expertise;
- It is important to keep in mind that the Action Plan in itself will not bring about implementation, but is merely a tool to assist – a road map;
- Crucial for any successful implementation will be the investment in structures that critically review progress made.

References:

- ◆ The presentation by the UK delegation to OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Oct. 2007. www.osce.org/item/27041.html,
- ◆ The report on the progress made during the first five years following 1325, called *"From Global to Local: Making Peace Work for Women"*, by The UN NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security)



<http://ifor.org/WPP/index.html>

- ◆ The report Securing Equality – Engendering Peace: A guide to policy and planning on 1325, by UN-INSTRAW, 2006.
- ◆ Dutch National Action Plan on Resolution 1325: Taking a stand for women, peace and security.
- ◆ Working Group 1325: Terms of engagement with the Dutch government in the joint implementation of NAP 1325.