

## Women's Roles in Peace Consolidation

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to the  
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### CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President and members of the Security Council,

Thank you for the honour to address the Security Council on women's roles in peace consolidation. Peace consolidation is an uncertain enterprise. It is one thing to agree to a ceasefire, and quite another to move from there to a point where societies can resolve conflicts through inclusive governance without reverting to armed combat. This year we have seen many examples — from Timor-Leste to the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan to Iraq, the process of establishing a secure peace appears even more difficult than it did a year ago. With the setting up of the Peacebuilding Commission, the UN has strengthened its peacebuilding architecture, increasing coherence in fulfilling its peacebuilding mandate. But today we must ask what else is urgently needed, and how Security Council resolution 1325 could be more effectively implemented to bring about just and sustainable peace.

From our work in over 20 conflict-affected countries, UNIFEM has learned what is needed to implement resolution 1325 effectively in peace consolidation. Let me mention three points:

#### **1. Peace-building efforts must ensure women's physical and economic security**

In peacemaking and peacebuilding, the *urgent* often drives out the *important*. The urgent is the need to stop the fighting — which means placating former combatants and addressing the grievances of warring parties in peace talks and agreements. But parties to the conflict are not the same as parties to the peace. Peacebuilding and consolidation require that all parties with an interest in peace are engaged in negotiating a new social contract, building institutions of a new society, and re-establishing livelihoods.

Women are a crucial resource in this process. Peace agreements, early recovery and post-conflict governance do better when women are involved. Women make a difference in part because they adopt a more inclusive approach to peace and security and address key social and economic issues that provide the foundations of sustainable peace and that would otherwise be ignored. The question is not only what women can bring to peace consolidation, but also what peacebuilding can do to promote women's human rights and gender equality — transforming social structures so they do not reproduce the exclusion and marginalization that underlie conflict.

Women know the costs of war: what it means to be subject to sexual violence designed to destroy communities, what it means to be displaced, to flee their homes and property, to be excluded from public life and regarded as less than full citizens. Peace consolidation must include ending impunity for sexual violence and raising the political and economic costs to those who engage in it, making sure they are not rewarded with state power and high profile jobs as a result of negotiated peace agreements.

Two of women's most urgent needs are for physical safety and economic security. Efforts to engage women in public decision-making will not succeed if women risk continued violence for taking on public roles, and they cannot be expected to be effective public actors if they have no source of livelihood.

What UNIFEM is seeing on the ground — in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia — is that public space for women in these situations is shrinking. Women are becoming assassination targets when they dare defend women's rights in public decision-making. And everywhere there is evidence that sexual and gender-based violence is taken into homes and communities after conflicts have ended, as ex-combatants return with small arms, and social norms that protect women remain broken.

In all of the conflict areas we have worked, we have witnessed women's willingness to take risks — reaching across borders, organizing to support dialogue and defying threats to their security. But we cannot rely on the bravery of women; we need systems to be in place. In peace consolidation, the international community must invest in reforming the security sector to ensure women's safety, particularly where armies or police have been a source of the violence they experience. In Rwanda, after police said they could not protect women as they lacked vehicles for rapid response, UNIFEM organized an inter-agency response to set up specialized gender desks in police stations and provide them with training, hotlines and motorcycles to reach women in remote districts.

## **2. Sustainable peace requires real justice for women**

To consolidate peace there must be justice for women in accordance with international human rights standards. This means removing all laws that discriminate against women, formulating new gender equality laws, strengthening rule of law institutions to implement them, and empowering women to access these institutions and demand their rights. To support these efforts, UNIFEM is working with the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) to support a global Partnership for Gender Justice, co-chaired by the Governments of Sweden and South Africa, to marshal Member States, UN system, and non-governmental resources to support these efforts.

Too often in conflict-affected countries we see that laws on victim compensation do not include compensation for rape, which is regarded as a minor crime. I just returned from Kosovo with Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, where we met with women who had been brutally raped during the conflict. They feel doubly violated now as they seek justice, both locally and from international tribunals who promise to help them but never deliver. If we are serious about ensuring justice and consolidating peace, we must do more to provide legal training for judges and lawyers, witness protection, medical support services and compensation.

Family matters and personal status are typically left to traditional or customary legal systems — partly because they are an inexpensive system of dispute resolution, and partly to buy the cooperation of traditional or tribal leaders by giving them control over personal and family matters. The result is the perpetuation of honour crimes, exchange of women to resolve inter-clan disputes, denial of women's inheritance rights and other human rights violations. Justice for women cannot be done on the cheap, and women's rights cannot be bargained away for other political gains. Justice for women has to be featured as an integral and achievable part of any UN strategic plan of assistance.

## **3. Peace processes require institutional change and stronger accountability systems**

Women's engagement in peace consolidation requires consistent, sustained investment in strategies to ensure that the institutions engaged in rebuilding governance, justice, security, economic, and social systems have the will and the capacity to respond to women's needs, and that women are taking leadership roles in influencing these processes. UNIFEM's peace and security approach is based on five integrated elements: (1) bringing women to the peace table; (2) supporting women's engagement in building new constitutional and legal frameworks; (3) investing in women's leadership in the development of new institutions, including gender-sensitive judicial and law enforcement agencies; (4) building partnerships to generate and support national gender justice movements advocating to integrate women into national peace, security, development and rights agendas; and (5) support for women's participation in elections and political decision-making.

What we have learned is that the earlier women are recognized as peace agents and engaged in peace processes, from mediations to peace negotiations to constitutional reform, the more they are seen as legitimate actors. This is why in Uganda this week, UNIFEM is supporting the launch of a Peace

Caravan with women from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Uganda to demand that the international community respect resolution 1325 and include women at the Juba peace talks.

Some progress has been made in ensuring women's inclusion in post-conflict decision-making. A variety of quotas and reservation systems in Iraq, Burundi, Rwanda, Afghanistan and elsewhere have resulted in record numbers of women in national assemblies. But quotas alone will not ensure effective participation. A social group that has long been excluded from public decision-making must be supported to exercise the knowledge and skills needed to shape policy and legislation and enforce implementation.

This is not just a problem of women's capacities. It is about obstacles to gender equality in the institutions that shape the ways decisions are made, resources allocated, and policies implemented. Critical institutions — such as the military and ministries of finance and planning — do not automatically adopt gender equality goals even when peace agreements mandate them to do so. Three changes are critical to enable public institutions to bring gender equality into their leadership, staff, and peacebuilding work. These include:

- top-level directives that make women's rights a key element of the institution's work;
- incentive systems to reward efforts to address women's needs and advance their rights;
- measures to include gender equality in individual work plans and performance reviews.

Although more women have been brought into the military, the police and civilian staff of peacekeeping missions, they are still a token minority. Appointments of women to the top levels of mediation and facilitation teams, as well as peacekeeping missions, are still rare. UNIFEM and other women's rights advocates must negotiate anew each time to bring women to peace talks or include women's priorities in post-conflict needs assessments, and even when they succeed, they find that resources are not allocated to meeting these priorities.

In conclusion, if we want to consolidate peace, *we must stop rewarding those who are most socially destructive, and engage those with constructive, peaceful solutions.* Writing in the 16th century, French philosopher Montaigne stated: "Women are not wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them, since the men make these rules without consulting them." One way of understanding peace consolidation is as a massive national effort to remake the rules of governance, justice, security and economic activity to eliminate the causes of conflict, distrust, and inequalities. For women of all social groups, this opportunity to participate in re-building the rules cannot be missed. Only then will we have peace under the laws of justice.