

Towards the implementation of the UNSCR 1325: a brief analysis from Secretary General reports on Women, Peace and Security

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Progress in implementing 1325? Some background considerations

Almost fourteen years ago, on October 31st 2000, the UN Security Council approved UNSCR 1325, finally recognizing the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Now, more than one decade later, it is undoubted that some progress has been made through the promotion of gender experts, training on gender protection, and a specific focus on the prevention of sexual and gender based violence and protection in armed conflicts. *But do those efforts really mean that the linkage between women, peace and security has become a priority and a pillar on which peace processes, post-conflict reconstruction and conflict prevention are based?* Currently, it does not seem possible to provide an affirmative answer to this question. Despite the multiplication of references to Resolution 1325 in UN tools and some best practices, the statements of the resolution often remain mere worldly references with no practical reflection, and the potential encompassed in the creation of a comprehensive environment that promotes and implements the participation of women in all fields related to the prevention, protection and resolution of armed conflicts, and recovery and reconstruction from them, is not yet a reality. The reasons behind this are multi-dimensional and deserving of a dedicated space, but *the fact is that this potentiality is not sufficiently valued, and all actors concerned (UN and non UN) need to make more effort to transform recommendations into an actual and immediate impact for women, girls and communities, a fact that is recognized by the Secretary General, who strongly urged improved efforts in his last two reports on women, peace and security (2012 and 2013).*

From its adoption in 2000, UNSCR 1325 progressively stimulated a number of initiatives, entities and tools¹ to help to promote and apply the crucial role of women in peace settlements and post-conflict situations, but a more prominent interest in gender issues in peacekeeping and peacebuilding seemed to arise in 2010. Maybe following the first decade of its implementation, and/or maybe in the light of preparations for the 2015 high-level review assessing progress in UNSCR 1325, it is indeed in recent years that the evident gaps in the achievement of 1325's aims have begun to be clearly pointed out. The Secretary General's 2013 report on women, peace and security is particularly strong in this respect, and almost sounds like a wake-up call compared to previous reports. Despite the number of good practices developed, the Secretary General recognizes that not enough efforts have been made to ensure the effectiveness of the resolution, or to cultivate real changes in the lives of women and their communities, seeing them not only as victims, but as equal promoters of peace and development.

¹ New initiatives to ensure more effective implementation at the regional level have been taken, such as the development of a Pacific regional action plan; the development by the League of Arab States of a regional strategy on women, peace and security; efforts to secure financing for the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional action plan for the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The adoption in April 2011 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, including during armed conflict, is an important contribution to the strengthening of the legal framework to prevent such violence, protect victims and end impunity. The initial reporting on the European Union indicators on women, peace and security, the release in November 2011 of the first annual report of the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) detailing the work of NATO to support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the appointment of a NATO special representative for women, peace and security are also positive signs, along with the Fourth Ministerial Meeting on the Role of Women in the Development of Organization of Islamic Cooperation States.

What does UNSCR 1325 outline and to whom?

In summary, UNSCR 1325 (adopted by the Security Council in October 2000) reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction, stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Those statements recall, among other things, previous resolutions² and the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action³. In general, the resolution urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate a gender perspective in to all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. Notably, 1325 addresses 7 recommendations to the Secretary General (to implement a strategic plan of action, appoint more women as special representatives, expand the role of women in field operations, insert a gender component in to peacekeeping operations, provide training guidelines on the protection of women to member states, conduct a study on the impact of conflicts on women, and include all gender aspects in all reports made to the Security Council); three to Members States and the Security Council (voluntarily establish financial and technical support for gender training, increase the representation of women at decision-making levels, and include a gender perspective in Security Council field missions); four to all parties to armed conflict (respect international law regarding women and girls, take special protective measures, end impunity, respect the needs of female refugees); and two to all actors (take into account the needs, support and protection of women in conflict environments, consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes).

The annual reports made by the Secretary General on the implementation of 1325 are designed to list and analyze the progress made in relation to each one of these points, and to formulate appropriate recommendations to improve the situation. The reports are usually structured into an introduction that clarifies the sources of the information included in the report (usually UN missions, UN agencies, local and international NGOs and civil society), an overview of the main areas of progress, followed by the specific achievements and gaps in prevention, participation, protection and recovery, with observations and recommendations made at the end.

The 2012 SG report on women, peace and security: [an incentive to further progress](#)

The Secretary General's 2012 report on women, peace and security does not point to comprehensive success, but does tend to show that many results were achieved, even if gaps still persist and improvements in many domains are needed.

The report opens with a summary of the main initiatives on women and security developed during 2010-2011 by UN entities, non-UN actors and at national levels, highlighting as best practices: the adoption of the UN results framework on women, peace and security, which helped to better identify good practices and areas requiring coverage; the initiatives of the EU, NATO and Islamic countries that helped to ensure more effective policies regarding 1325 at regional and sub-regional levels; and the adoption of national action plans on gender in many countries, sometimes with integrated or parallel action plans on sexual and/or gender based violence. A slight increase in references to gender and to 1325 in the reports and tools produced by UN missions and structures was recognized in 2012 compared to previous years: even if the number of reports including women, peace and security decreased in 2011 compared with 2010, the better

² Resolutions 1261 (1999) of August 25th 1999, 1265 (1999) of September 17th 1999, 1296 (2000) of April 19th 2000 and 1314 (2000) of August 11th 2000.

³ (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century" (A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular those concerning women and armed conflict.

quality of the analysis resulted in an increased number of recommendations that referred to gender issues. In relation to the Security Council, 38% of resolutions adopted in 2011 made a specific reference to 1325 (compared to 37% in 2010).

Despite those initiatives, the report recognizes that “translating norms into practice must in the end be measured against real change in the lives of women, girls, boys and men across the continuum from conflict to peace”⁴.

Regarding those real changes, he opens the second part of the report with paragraphs dedicated to prevention: “In the past decade, the international community has firmly expressed its aspiration to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention”⁵. This can be considered a very important element, since prevention, even beyond protection and response, is the basis for change in almost all domains. It is also remarkable that the first sphere the SG refers to when talking about prevention is linked to the progress made in early warning tools for conflict-related sexual violence, then stating that “the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence remain an urgent priority”⁶. Conflict-related sexual violence is one of the most serious human rights violations that tend to be committed against women, and it is also one that generates significant public attention. It is important to note, however, that one year later, in his 2013 report, the SG will insist on the fact that conflict-related sexual violence remains a priority, yet an urgent appeal will be launched to all actors in order to assign the same interest to the “full spectrum of security threats faced by women and girls”⁷. The necessity to take into account the whole array of gender issues in a comprehensive manner, and not limit the focus to conflict-related sexual violence, which was hinted at in the 2012 report, will become the main pillar of the 2013 report. This is of utmost importance, since it indicates that prevention and response limited to only one domain can only have a limited effect, while the interconnected nature of all gender issues with the socio-economic, political and justice environments need to be taken into account as part of a truly comprehensive and effective prevention.

This need to consider “the broader spectrum of human rights violations against women in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations”⁸ is already stressed in the 2012 report, where the SG reminds that a “sustained attention is required to the timely reporting, referral and investigation of” all violations against women,” including threats and attacks against female human rights defenders”⁹.

The SG also stresses that “the root causes of conflict, including economic and social justice issues [...] and the management of natural resources [...] affect women and men differently owing to gender based discrimination and gender inequality and therefore require gender-responsive analysis and responses”¹⁰. For this, “effective conflict prevention is embedded in long-term investments in women’s and girls’ empowerment and in support for women’s efforts to build peace”¹¹. Unfortunately, the SG recognizes that, despite punctual efforts to improve the situation, the actual participation of women in the peacebuilding process continues to progress slowly, as well as the political participation of women. For example, regarding the representation of women among mediators, negotiators and technical experts in formal peace negotiations in 2011, of 14 peace processes, only 4 negotiating party delegations included a female delegate. Gender experts were deployed to 5 of 11 relevant peace negotiations (45 per cent). Consultations with women’s civil society organizations were conducted on a regular basis in 7 of those 11 negotiations (64 per cent). At the same time, little progress was registered in the gender dimension of mediation. According to the report, “agreements without gender-sensitive provisions can limit women’s opportunities

⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 4

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 5

⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 4 September 2013, pag. 2

⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 8

¹¹ Ibid.

to achieve basic security, as well as political, economic and social empowerment”¹², but in 2011, of the nine peace agreements signed (involving eight countries), only two contained provisions related to women, peace and security.

The report also underlines the situation of female presence among high-level officials within the UN, and the importance of gender advisors, noting that “as of December 2011, all multidimensional peacekeeping operations and political missions managed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have gender advisers”¹³. Both among civilian and military personnel in peacekeeping missions, however, statistics show that there is a low female presence: “as of 31 December 2011, women made up 10 per cent of United Nations police and 3 per cent of military staff in peacekeeping missions. The Police Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has continued to implement the United Nations Global Effort, which set a target of reaching 20 per cent female police participation in peacekeeping operations by 2014”¹⁴.

Regarding protection issues, the 2012 report focuses on conflict-related sexual violence, reminding, inter alia, that “improving pre-deployment training for military and police personnel participating in peacekeeping missions, and building the capacity of national security-sector actors and institutions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence remain priorities”¹⁵. However, important references are also made to the risks derived from a lack of registration documentation, which often means women are unable to access health and education services or other benefits, as well as explosive weapons causing forced displacement. In relation to protection, the SG reiterates “the need for clear instructions, directives and guidance on how to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls”, also reporting that “of 16 military strategic concepts of operations and force operation orders issued from 2007 to mid-2012 across nine peacekeeping operations, (56 per cent) included measures to protect the human rights of women and girls. Of police components in 13 missions, 54 per cent had been issued with concepts of operations that included those measures”¹⁶.

The statement expressed by the SG regarding recovery is of extreme importance: “Investing in women’s economic capacities and employment is not only important to women’s own empowerment but also key to long-term peace and recovery”¹⁷. He explains how “a 2012 study on the impact of women’s engagement in economic recovery indicates a positive statistical relationship between female employment and increases in family and community welfare in post-conflict contexts, particularly when women have access to less vulnerable jobs. However, it also notes that women-targeted economic interventions continue to be largely clustered around support to engagement in the informal economy and do not permit a significant shift in their rate of market engagement”¹⁸. The problem of the extremely limited resources addressed to the socio-economic empowerment of women in recovery and post-conflict reconstruction will also form a central component of the 2013 report. It indicates that, in terms of funds, especially for prevention and reconstruction, the implementation of 1325 does not seem to be considered by donors and member states to be a priority.

The last part of the report is dedicated to the importance of women during conflict mediation and peace processes. The SG explains the importance of raising “gender-specific issues early on — from the onset of the conflict analysis phase and the earliest moments of peace negotiations. This can help ensure that provisions related to gender equality are included in peace accords. While such references in themselves

¹² Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 9

¹³ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 15

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 14

¹⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 14

¹⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 17

¹⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 17

cannot ensure that gender equality or women's rights are promoted subsequently, they can create strategic entry points for future action"¹⁹. To do so, the participation of women across all levels from the beginning of peace processes is integral.

In his conclusions, the SG, despite recognizing some progress in coordination, "building the capacity of civilian and uniformed staff and improving the guidance, training and availability of technical gender experts to support fact-finding and assessment missions, mediation, negotiation, as well as in early warning tools, remained concerned "about the continued slow progress in women's participation and representation in peace talks, in the inclusion of provisions for promoting women's and girls' rights in peace agreements and in increasing women's representation in elected and appointed posts; the persistence of serious protection gaps, obstacles to women's and girls' access to justice and signs of the weakening of women's rights in some contexts; and the slow change in the share of budgets allocated to women's empowerment and gender equality in post-conflict contexts"²⁰.

He addresses his recommendations in particular to the Security Council and to Member States in order to improve the situation. Specifically, he recommends:

- That all country-specific and thematic decisions and the establishment of or renewal of mission mandates are reviewed from the perspective of their impact on the empowerment and human rights of women and girls, and that related instructions are included in mandates.
- Explore means to ensure the continued implementation of resolutions on women, peace and security within the framework of mission drawdown and transitions.
- Ensure regular consultations with and systematically invite female civil society leaders and women's organizations to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, including peace talks and international engagement conferences.
- Appoint more women as mediators, co-mediators and advisers to mediation processes.
- Dedicate sector-specific gender expertise in post-conflict recovery programmes, for instance within the sectors of security, justice, governance, public administration, economic recovery and social services.
- Establish country-specific or regional funding mechanisms, including trust funds that target resources to the capacity development of women's organizations and to initiatives implemented by them.

The 2013 SG report on women, peace and security – Pleading for a real engagement

The 2013 SG report on women, peace and security has a tone quite different from the previous one: it does not devote a lot of space to the results achieved, despite recognizing them, instead devoting attention to stressing the continued gaps. The SG does not deny that efforts and progress has been made, particularly "in the form of increased provision of technical resources such as expertise and training. National and regional action plans, the United Nations strategic results framework and other coordination and coherence-building tools, and their use of indicators and data, have made possible a more accurate assessment of the rate of progress and have made gaps more visible. In the areas of prevention and protection, I note the significant heightening of policy and operational focus on monitoring, prevention and prosecution of violence against women in conflict"²¹.

¹⁹ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 20

²⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, 2 October 2012, pag. 22

²¹ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 2.

But he immediately expresses his concerns, and from the beginning of the report, he urges the Security Council to act in order to improve the situation, since he remains “concerned about the quality of gender analysis and actionable recommendations reaching the Security Council”²².

From the beginning, he underlines one of the concerns that will feature throughout the report: “During the past year, increased attention has been paid to prevention in relation to conflict-related sexual violence. I call for greater attention to be paid to the full spectrum of security threats faced by women and girls”²³. He goes on to indicate that analysis shows that linkages are often not made between women’s participation, security, and the core work of United Nations peace operations, and that this also occurs due to a persistent lack in many mission settings of data disaggregated by sex and age, and that shows the impact of different (from sexual violence) security threats on women and girls, “meaning that potential action that could contribute to greater security for women may not be taken”²⁴. From that concern he immediately makes requests to senior officials to help to improve the situation, always including that kind of data in their reports and briefings. He will also try to create guidance to support those data collection measures. As in 2012 he underlined that many reports included references to women, but only about sexual and gender based violence in armed conflict: and in any case, linkages between gender and conflict data and analysis in reports and actionable recommendations were not made consistently.

He recognized that there had been some efforts to follow up the recommendations made in previous reports, to include references to women, peace and security in the renewal of all peacekeeping mission mandates. But at the same time, he notes that “the resolutions establishing and renewing the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (which came to an end on 19 August 2012) contained no references to women, peace and security”²⁵.

In relation to prevention, from which he began the report, he welcomes the progress made in comprehensive prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence in conflict, but again stresses that “parallel to more effective mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict, greater attention needs to be paid to the full range of human rights violations experienced by women, including the gender-specific impacts of forced displacement, family separation, withholding of humanitarian assistance and loss of land, property and livelihood. Human trafficking and early and forced marriage in conflict settings are issues that demand greater attention”²⁶. On the same line, he states that “to address the root causes of conflict and threats to the security of women and girls, I encourage stronger attention to be paid to means that bridge the gaps between the political, human rights and development arms of the United Nations, including in mission withdrawal or drawdown, to addressing the full range of socioeconomic and political drivers of lasting peace and to strengthening community resilience and capacity for non-violent conflict resolution”²⁷; and he welcomed the progress made in 2012 in increasing the representation of women among mediators, negotiators and technical experts in formal peace negotiations, where 100% all UN teams mediating peace processes included women, and many gender experts were deployed. A larger use of gender advisors was welcomed, but in relation to the military and police no relevant changes could be noted from 2012, going on to state that “increasing the proportion of women in uniformed components of peacekeeping operations and national security sector institutions is crucial to the effective implementation of protection mandates. Women can be better placed than men to carry out some peacekeeping tasks, including working in women’s prisons and assisting female ex-combatants during demobilization, [...] as at December 2012, 10 per cent of all police (including formed police units) were

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 3

²⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 5

²⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 8

women, as in December 2011. Women's share of military posts also held constant, at 3 per cent of the 79,750 individual troops²⁸. At least there has been training introduced on women's human rights, including prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence for military, police and civilian personnel deployed to international peace operations. Similar training is being developed for some national security and law enforcement institutions.

He then goes on to discuss the protection risks for women, re-stating the different risks already listed in the 2012 report, and adding an interesting element: "the proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious security concern for women. The Arms Trade Treaty, adopted on 2 April 2013, is the first treaty to recognize the link between gender-based violence and the international arms trade"²⁹.

In relation to economic recovery and access to resources, the SG expresses major concerns, since "an increase in women's income and control over income results in higher spending on education and health, increases in child survival rates, higher girls' education rates and improved domestic food security. Such findings notwithstanding, women's economic security post-conflict is rarely treated as a priority"³⁰.

An important paragraph is also dedicated to the rule of law and access to justice, underlining not only the importance of ensuring access to justice for female victims, but also that "women's representation in the justice sector plays a significant role in increasing reporting of crimes and enhancing public trust in rule of law institutions, and should feature more prominently in justice sector reform initiatives"³¹. And again, he underlines that "while greater attention has been paid to prosecution for sexual violence crimes than hitherto, more must be done to ensure that transitional justice addresses the full range of conflict-related violations of women's rights, including gender-specific impacts of forced displacement, violations of social and economic rights, enforced disappearances and destruction of civilian infrastructure"³².

An innovative point is represented in the call to "Member States and donors to step up their efforts to reduce maternal mortality and expand access to sexual and reproductive health services"³³, as well as to promote women in the deliverance of services in order to facilitate the access of all women in humanitarian need to basic services.

He then highlights an example of the lack of funding in order to implement 1325: in 2012 the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women launched a special thematic funding window addressing violence against women in conflict-affected settings. "In 2012 alone, the Trust Fund received a total of 2,210 applications from 121 countries, amounting to \$1.1 billion. However, only \$8.4 million could be awarded — less than 1 per cent of total demand"³⁴.

In his conclusions, the SG regrets the continued presence "in all areas [of] deficits in opportunities for women to exercise leadership, in resources provided to address their needs and that are necessary to exercise their rights and in the capacity and commitment of peace and security actors to place women's participation and protection at the centre of all approaches. [...] Without a significant implementation shift, women's perspectives will remain underrepresented in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding for the foreseeable future".

²⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 17

²⁹ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 18

³⁰ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 19

³¹ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 20

³² Ibid.

³³ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 23

³⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, September 2013, pag. 24

Among the main recommendations he urges Member States to use all possible tools in order to strengthen women's contribution to peace efforts, adoption of national plans, adoption of the Small Arms Treaty and internal laws on small arms trafficking, development of dedicated funding mechanisms, promotion of female participation in all domains related to prevention, protection and development, including management of natural resources and climate change. He intends to address organizational barriers affecting the recruitment, retention and promotion of female civilian personnel in middle and senior management levels of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions; to develop medium-term plans for meeting the global recruitment goal of increasing the number of female military and police personnel serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as to revise guidelines adopting new tools developed by other entities, such as NATO and the EU. He also encourages Member States to ensure equal citizenship rights for women, including the ability for women to pass on their citizenship to their children so that they are not rendered stateless; to adopt national policies on gender-sensitive asylum determination processes; to accelerate efforts to meet and finance the recovery needs of women and girls, in particular female heads of household, including by reaching the minimum 15 per cent spending targets for post-conflict peacebuilding projects on gender equality and women's empowerment and strengthening women's economic security and ensuring their enjoyment of economic and social rights.

And again, with his final recommendations, he reiterates the need for a comprehensive gender approach: to place gender experts with specific technical skills within the substantive sections of United Nations peace operations, to deploy female protection advisers to monitor and report on sexual violence in all relevant situations and to provide training to relevant staff in undertaking conflict analysis from a gender perspective; to include women, peace and security issues in all thematic debates, such as those relating to terrorism, counter-terrorism measures, transnational organized crime and conflict prevention and natural resources.

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