**Report on promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)**

**Submission by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders**

**Summary:**

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) commends the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the adoption of the Resolution 45/28, include its provision requesting the High Commissioner “to present to the Human Rights Council, at its forty-eighth session, an analytical report” (para 7)on the implementation of this resolution, and the integration of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) priorities into the work of the HRC.

GNWP’s monitoring and analysis of the work of the HRC, including in particular the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and consultations with in-country partners indicate that there is a positive trend in terms of more WPS analysis included in HRC mechanisms and instruments, including the UPR process. Discussions of WPS issues are increasingly substantive and broad, and the role of women as peacebuilders, and their contributions to preventing conflict and ensuring peaceful protests, is increasingly being discussed. However, WPS is still not systematically used as a framework through which to conceptualize and analyse the interlinkages between women’s human rights, peace and security. Moreover, we note that there are still limited opportunities for civil society engagement in the process – both at the country and at the HRC level.

Therefore, we recommend:

* To continue to identify ways for increased engagement of the civil society in HRC’s work, including in the UPR process.
* To identify and support more opportunities for broad-base civil society (including peacebuilding organizations’ and organizations’ working on WPS) engagement in the UPR report preparation at the country level.
* To encourage broader conceptual framing of WPS resolutions, including specific attention to women’s meaningful participation and leadership in peace processes, and women’s contributions to conflict prevention and disarmament, and systematically discussing these issues during the UPR interactive dialogue.

**Full submission:**

Adoption of the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 45/28 was a critical step towards the greater recognition and strengthening of the synergies between the Women and Peace and Security agenda, and the UN’s human rights infrastructure, including the treaty bodies. The resolution built on the General Recommendation 30 of the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as the growing attention to the State Parties’ obligations under the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women and Peace and Security in the Universal Periodic Review reports and recommendations.

The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) commends the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the adoption of the Resolution 45/28, include its provision requesting the High Commissioner “to present to the Human Rights Council, at its forty-eighth session, an analytical report” (para 7)on the implementation of this resolution, and the integration of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) priorities into the work of the HRC. The present submission builds on GNWP’s long-standing experience in supporting the implementation of the WPS resolutions, and in strengthening the synergies between WPS resolutions and human rights treaties and instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It is based on GNWP’s monitoring and analysis of the work of the HRC, including in particular the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and GNWP’s understanding of specific country contexts, based on its work to advance WPS resolutions’ implementation in them.

**Increased inclusion of references to UNSCR 1325 in UPR**

While mentions of the UNSCR 1325 have begun to appear in UPR interactive dialogue, and recommendations to State Parties since 2009, their frequency has increased over the years. The recommendations related to UNSCR 1325 has also increased in specificity, moving from calls to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, to recommendations to “Allocate financial resources for the efficient implementation of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)” (recommendation given by Ukraine to Afghanistan during the 32nd Session in January 2019). Most of the UPR submissions in 2020 included a direct reference to UNSCR 1325 and/or WPS.

**Some progress in broader conceptualization of the WPS agenda as a human security agenda, but more work needed**

Importantly, several of the UPR submissions in 2020 have gone beyond merely noting that the country has adopted, or is implementing, a National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS. For example, the Kenyan government’s submission (A/HRC/WG.6/35/KEN/1) highlighted that the country’s new NAP “incorporates a human security approach” (para 102). Similarly, the Liberian government’s submission (A/HRC/WG.6/36/LBR/1) noted that the NAP’s alignment and contributions to the “Pro-poor agenda” and promotion of women’s full participation in national decision-making (para 23).

However, despite progress in viewing the WPS agenda broadly, and linking it to women’s meaningful participation in political and economic life, much of the focus in UPR reports and discussions is still on women as victims. When gender perspective is applied to speak about refugees, it is primarily in the context of protection of women. For example, in the case of the Kenya’s UPR in January 2020, a recommendation to “Increase efforts to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence, including in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees” (A/HRC/44/9, Recommendation 142.235) was made by Belarus. The recommendation is critically important. However, in the context of the State Party report statement that “To enhance security in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, an expanded community policing programme has been introduced” (A/HRC/WG.6/35/KEN/1, para 47), it would have been useful to request further data and provide recommendations on meaningful inclusion of women in such structures. From GNWP’s experience of work in Kenya, it is evident that women are often excluded from such policing programmes, despite the provisions of UNSCR 1325. Similarly, women were not explicitly mentioned in the State Party report’s section on Protection of human rights defenders, nor in any of the recommendations that pertained to this issue.

When issues central to the WPS agenda are included in the UPR submissions – for example, in Armenian government’s submission’s recognition of women’s contribution to ensuring peaceful nature of protests (A/HRC/WG.6/35/ARM/1, Para 65) – they are not explicitly linked to UNSCR 1325, nor discussed at length during the interactive dialogue. The WPS agenda could provide a helpful framework for discussing such issues in more detail and providing relevant recommendations – for example, on the protection of women protesters. Similarly, the WPS agenda would have been a useful framework to amplify and strengthen the recommendations made by Mexico, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Panama and Peru to Sweden with regards to its arms trade (Recommendations 156.179, 156.180, 156.181, 156.182 and 156.183).

Moving forward, it would be important to advance a broad conceptual understanding of the WPS agenda among the HRC State Parties, to ensure that issues related to women’s meaningful participation in all processes related to peace and security, as well as addressing of gendered roots of conflict, are adequately discussed and addressed; and that women’s leadership on issues of conflict prevention and resolution – including campaigns on disarmament and arms trade control – are recognized.

**Protection of women human rights defenders**

A positive element, from the perspective of contributing to the implementation of the WPS agenda through the HRC and its mechanism is the increasing attention paid to the threats faced by women human rights defenders. GNWP noted that all resolutions that mentioned human rights defenders, notably the Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/2 on the Promotion and protection of human rights in Nicaragua, and Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/16 on the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders explicitly mentioned women human rights defenders as a particularly vulnerable group. Similarly, the resolution A/HRC/RES/44/20 calls on States to “pay particular attention to the safety and protection of women and girls, as well as of women human rights defenders, from acts of intimidation and harassment, and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, in the context of peaceful protests”. This recognition, and particular attention paid to women human rights defenders and civil society activists, who are often at the forefront of peaceful protests, is critical and contributes to better implementation of the WPS agenda, including in particular UNSCR 2467 that expressed deep concern about “threats, attacks and restrictions on the work of civil society organizations” and called on States to condemn them. However, these mentions did not refer to the WPS resolutions – something that could be addressed in the future to ensure greater synergy between HRC’s work and the WPS agenda.

**Consultations with civil society in UPR processes**

Consultations with GNWP partners have shown that women peacebuilders are often not aware of the UPR process and how to engage with it. GNWP’s partners in Kenya shared that they were not aware of the process, despite the government’s statement that “the Report was prepared through a highly consultative process, involving civil society organizations”. GNWP’s experience in fostering greater integration of WPS provisions in CEDAW reporting, shows that engagement of WPS civil society actors is a critical step towards it. It also helps bridge the silos within the government, leading to more cross-cutting and comprehensive reports.

**Integration of the roles of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and the WPS agenda, in HRC resolutions**

Despite the progress on the recognition of women’s roles as leaders of peaceful protests and human rights defenders, references to WPS resolutions and to women’s roles in conflict prevention and resolution, in leading peaceful processes, and addressing root causes of conflict, are very limited in HRC’s country-specific and thematic resolutions. For example, resolutions on “Situation of human rights in Belarus” (A/HRC/RES/44/19) and on “Situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath” (A/HRC/RES/45/1) do not mention women, their specific protection needs, nor their roles and the need for their meaningful inclusion, despite the critical role women have played in the context of Belarus, and the protests around the 2020 presidential elections. Similarly, the roles of women as human rights defenders, humanitarian first responders, and their work towards resolving the political crisis are not mentioned in the resolution A/HRC/RES/45/2 on “Strengthening cooperation and technical assistance in the field of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”. Concerningly, the resolution on “The central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights” (A/HRC/RES/44/2) also did not include an explicit reference to women or their contributions, despite the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, and their leadership in addressing the pandemic’s impacts, and maintaining peace during the crisis.

Positive examples of **recognizing and amplifying women’s roles in decision-making related to issues of peace and security** include Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/26 on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, which calls for “ensuring consultation with and the representation of women at all levels of decision-making relating to the camp-closure strategy and its implementation”, as well as Resolution A/HRC/RES/43/27 on the situation of human rights in South Sudan, which stresses the need for “effective and meaningful participation of women during all stages and in all structures envisaged in the Revitalized Agreement”, and recognizes women and youth’s role in reaching the agreement. Such provisions that identify specific avenues and channels for women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and decision-making related to issues of peace and security (such as the closure or camps for internally displaced persons) are a critical contribution towards the effective implementation of the WPS agenda. To ensure synergy and alignment with other policy frameworks related to the WPS resolutions at the country level, it would be important to make an explicit reference to these resolutions when framing such recommendations. This was the case of resolutions A/HRC/RES/45/15 on the situation of human rights in Yemen and A/HRC/RES/45/21 on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, which include direct references to UNSCR 1325, and call for “meaningful participation and representation of women in peace efforts and decision-making” in both countries. The resolution A/HRC/RES/45/21 also explicitly calls for “greater protection of civil society actors, including women peacebuilders”. Such language provides useful advocacy tool for women from the civil society, and should be replicated in future resolutions.

**Recommendations**

* Continue to identify ways for increased engagement of the civil society in HRC’s work, including in the UPR process. Civil society often works across silos and is well-positioned to point to the intersections between WPS priorities and human rights in their country – as was the case with the questions around arms trade in the case of Sweden. The current possibilities of engagement are useful, but limited only to organizations that have an ECOSOC status. More avenues for meaningful engagement with organizations that are not accredited, as well as individual activists should be identified.
* At the country level, identify and support more opportunities for broad-base civil society engagement. Reporting State Party governments should be encouraged to consult broadly, notify the civil society of the upcoming process early, and include peacebuilding organizations and those working on issues of WPS in the consultations. Diverse civil society should also be involved in the monitoring of the implementation of UPR recommendations – especially those related to women’s roles in conflict, conflict prevention and resolution – including by disseminating the report widely to existing civil society networks (for example those established to monitor progress on WPS commitments). This could be facilitated through a collaboration between the Government, relevant UN agencies, as well as international organizations and networks to reach out to, convene and support the participation of diverse actors.
* Encourage broader conceptual framing of WPS resolutions, and ensure that issues related to (1) protection of women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, protesters, journalists and civil society; (2) funding for the implementation of the WPS agenda, including funding for women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, activists and civil society, who are often at the forefront of the implementation; (3) disarmament and the disproportionate impact of armed violence on women; (4) access of women – including women refugees and internally displaced persons – to decision-making, are consistently discussed during the UPR process. This can be done by including an analysis of these issues in the compilation of the UN information and the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as providing training opportunities for civil society from reporting countries, to encourage them to reflect on these issues in their submissions.