**Submission by the Government of Georgia for the 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)**

1. **Legal and normative frameworks, policies and programmes to ensure the respect of the human rights of women In conflict prevention, conflict and post conflict, including participation in decision-making, the right to education, health, and to live free from violence and discrimination. Please provide information on the implementation of the UN Security Council agenda on women, peace and security (1325 and others)?**

The Government of Georgia is committed to strengthening the cooperation with international and local partners on the issues of women’s greater inclusion in peacebuilding process, their increased and meaningful participation in the development of the security plans, security provision and defense institutions. The Government of Georgia attaches great importance to women’s role in peace processes and continues efforts to facilitate further increase of their participation in peacebuilding, confidence building and reconciliation process.

The new Human Rights Strategy which is being developed for 2021-2030 attaches the priority to the realization of UN Women, Peace and Security Resolutions and incorporates specific objectives to fulfill the pledges the Government took under the international obligations.

GoG has been implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda since 2011, when Georgia developed its first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on WPS. In 2018, GoG adopted its third NAP for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS.

The NAP constitutes a whole of government approach to integrating gender perspectives in the security sector and in decision-making processes, using a gender lens in peace negotiations, protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution. The NAP was elaborated in close cooperation with international organizations, line ministries and state institutions, as well as civil society organizations, in particular those representing IDP and conflict affected women.

The NAP represented the state instrument for taking consolidated and coordinated actions to deliver global Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The 2018-2020 NAP is harmonized with the NAP of the Government of Georgia on the Protection of Human Rights and aligned with the relevant objectives, targets and indicators of the nationalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The lead and cooperating implementing agencies in the process of implementation of WPS are government ministries and institutions, while civil society and development partners play an important role as the supporting actors. Local municipalities are also identified as cooperating agencies and are requested to collaborate within the scope of their competence and authority, and increase their ownership by localizing the WPS agenda on municipality level in order to achieve the goals set out in the NAP.

The Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has established working group on WPS under the Commission to discuss progress and challenges related to the WPS issues. The Inter-Agency Commission, as a coordinate body plans to have active discussion and meetings with Governmental Agencies as well as CSOs to ensure effective implementation of the WPS agenda at the national and sub-national level.

In addition, the Government of Georgia made and submitted New Pledge of commitments on Women, Peace and Security, among them, to integrate goals and objectives of UN Security Council resolution 1325 in the national policies and sectoral strategies of state institutions; Ensure localization of the National Action Plan of Georgia for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) ; Increase capacity of the security sector, specialized units, Special Tasks Department, peacekeeping personnel, law enforcement and Legal Aid Service employees on preventing, and responding to SGBV, including in conflict and post-conflict situations; Ensure IDP and conflict-affected women’s needs, priorities and recommendations are reflected in the official negotiation processes; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality (SMR) continue regular dialogues with women’s CSOs around Geneva International Discussions (GID) and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) etcetera.

SMR together with MIA (The Ministry of Internal Affairs) conducts regular information meetings with the conflict-affected women living along the occupation line on the issues related to violence against women and domestic violence, as well as state programmes and mechanisms to protect the victims.

There have been many important activities deferred in 2020 due to the reasons of the pandemic, although the Human Rights Secretariat is currently preparing the last monitoring and evaluation report for 2020 of NAP on WPS 2018-2020 which is going to reflect the latest progress made by the state institutions in this direction.

GoG will continue supporting women’s increased engagement in peace processes and enhancing their role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

**b. Role of women's groups, women human rights defenders, women humanitarian, women peacebuilders and girls; and, their meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building, confidence building, and economic recovery?**

In order to ensure inclusive peace process and increase women’s engagement , the GoG (in particular, the participants of the Georgian delegation in the Geneva International Discussions, as well as IPRMs) holds regular meetings with relevant women’s NGOs and conflict-affected women to exchange views on peace processes, including the negotiations formats – GID/IPRMs, as well as to receive first-hand information on their needs and challenges in order to duly raise and discuss them within all relevant international fora, first and foremost the Geneva International Discussions and Incidents Prevention and Response Mechanisms.

Further to that, GoG supports women’s participation in confidence-building projects, funded or by international partners/organizations between the societies living on currently occupied territories (Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions) and the rest of Georgia.

**c. Prevention measures in place, guided by lessons learned to alert on crises, which might have a negative impact on the rights of women and girls?**

Despite the crisis, the Government of Georgia continued to pursue and enforce rigorous policies and measures against gender-based and domestic violence. As demonstrated in numerous countries (France, Spain), the COVID-19 crisis constituted to increasing risks of violence against women and domestic violence. To mitigate such risks, the Inter-agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence elaborated a **Communication Strategy on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence during the COVID-19 Crisis**. Together with line ministries, international and national partners, the Inter-Agency Commission was proactively implementing the strategy throughout the crisis.

The strategy and the ongoing communication campaign are, on the one hand, aimed at amplifying intolerance against VAW and DV by deepening knowledge and raising awareness on the matter. On the other hand, they serve to **provide information to domestic violence victims/survivors on alternate ways of reporting violence.**

In a time of the crisis, reporting domestic violence to law enforcement could have been linked to complications for women. **Therefore, throughout the crisis, the state intensively disseminated information on the alternative ways of reporting VAW and DV.** For example, the mobile application 112 (Emergency Services) incorporates chatbox and silent SOS signal options.

Information on alternate ways of reporting violence was disseminated through a **statewide SMS system - also translated into ethnic minority languages. Additionally, the information posters were displayed in pharmacy (GPC, PSP) and grocery store chains (Carrefour, "Two Steps") across the country.** Along with Georgian, the information was disseminated in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. Relevant information videos were made for television and social media.

Throughout the crisis, **the Ministry of Internal Affairs rapidly responded to VAW and DV cases.** Although the number of such reports did not significantly increase compared to last years' data, the Ministry took special measures for identifying and responding to domestic violence. As part of the tailored policy solutions, the police were instructed not to fine persons who violated the curfew to escape domestic violence.

Moreover, **112 Georgia - Public Safety Management Center staff were instructed to share this information with all the VAW and DV victims/survivors** who reported the cases of violence during the curfew hours.

**d. Measures of accountability implemented or planned to protect and provide remedies to women and girls victims and survivors of human rights violations, including gender based violence, during and after conflicts by State and non-state actors?**

Overall, Georgia has seen significant progress in responding to violence against women, especially domestic violence, including by law enforcement and increased disclosure of incidents by victims/survivors in the past few years, as evidenced by the relevant administrative data.

Up to 80% of the population of Georgia is aware that there are laws protecting victims of domestic violence, services for survivors of violence and anti-domestic violence campaigns. All of this suggests that the concentrated efforts to raise awareness of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and promote zero tolerance to VAW/DV in the country over the past few years are having a positive impact.

In 2016, the GoG expanded the scope of the VAW/DV NAP significantly broadening the obligations undertaken by Georgia, as well as ensuring increased protection of VAW/DV victims/survivors. Previous NAPs have focused solely on domestic violence. The VAW/DV NAPs for 2016-2017 and 2018-2020 cover violence against women more broadly and foresee activities aimed at the awareness raising, strengthening and expansion of services, establishment of a data collection system, further alignment of the legislation and policies with relevant international standards, cooperation with local municipalities and participation of survivors in policymaking.

In September 2016, the first state-run crisis center in Georgia was opened in Tbilisi (supported by UN Women) providing “out-patient” services (short-term accommodation, meals, hygiene supplies and clothing, psychosocial, socioeconomic, legal services and referral to shelters and translation/interpretation as needed) to VAW/DV survivors. Crisis centers in Gori, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti and Marneuli were opened (supported by UN Women) and are now operational and funded fully from the state budget. Currently, the State Fund is operating five crisis centers across the country.

In addition, the State Fund runs 5 shelters for VAW/DV survivors throughout Georgia that are fully funded by the state. As a result, the state funding for VAW/DV specialized services increased by 87 per cent between 2014 and 2017.

To encourage decentralization of specialized services VAW/DV survivors and increase access, crisis centers in Telavi and Zugdidi have been set up jointly by a local NGO Women’s Consultation Center “Sakhli” in collaboration with respective local municipalities. Funding for Telavi and Zugdidi crisis centers will be taken over by the local municipalities as of 2021.

The State Fund and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia (supported by UNFPA) have developed SOPs for healthcare system response to VAW/DV, in line with the WHO guidelines, on the identification of victims/survivors, treatment and referral. These guidelines are intended for primary and secondary healthcare services to more efficiently identify and provide relevant support to female victims of violence.

**e. Remedies and lifesaving available to victims of conflict-related violence, measures taken to ensure accessibility to those remedies and services by all women and girls?**

Despite the fact that GoG is deprived of the possibility to exercise effective control over the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia due to ongoing illegal Russian occupation, it remains strongly committed to taking care of and providing support to local communities, including women, who continue to suffer from occupation and its heavy humanitarian consequences. In this regard, GoG continues undertaking proactive and dynamic steps to provide access of the conflict-affected vulnerable population to quality education, healthcare and other state services available to all citizens of Georgia. This is done based on depoliticized, status-neutral mechanisms envisaged by Georgia’s reconciliation and engagement policy:

* Peace Fund has been established that based on international contributions, provides grants to the residents of the occupied regions for business projects. During the first call of the Fund, conducted in late 2020, more than a half of beneficiaries were conflict-affected women.
* Special educational programmes have been elaborated to provide conflict-affected young people with free access to all stages of quality education both on Georgian-controlled territory and abroad.
* State referral programme remains in place to ensure free-of-charge medical services for the population from the occupied regions.
* Access to various state services has been significantly eased and is not linked to the possession of Georgian citizenship and identification documents by people residing in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

**2. What are the promising practices, achievements and challenges in ensuring the promotion and protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings that have been highlighted in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms (resolutions, UPR, Special procedures, and investigative bodies)?**

As the achievement of the work of HRC and its mechanisms, we would like to underline the importance of all the relevant HRC resolutions aiming to ensure the promotion and protection of rights women and girls including in conflict and post-conflict settings. In this context it is worth of highlighting the new thematic resolution 45/29 “Promoting, protecting and respecting women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of human rights in humanitarian situations” initiated by Canada, Fiji, Georgia, Sweden and Uruguay within the HRC45 and adopted without a vote on October 6, 2020. It is important that the resolution was co-sponsored by 64 States from different regions. This new initiative aims to explore a more comprehensive and holistic approach to accountability that ensures the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls in humanitarian situations.

We would like also to underline the importance of the resolutions, such as 45/28 “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)” that represents another valuable tool that encourages the Member States to collect the relevant data and analyze the existing gaps and challenges in this regards.

Nevertheless, the main challenge in ensuring the promotion and protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings remains the implementation of the provisions of the relevant resolutions as well as of the recommendations made within the UPR process or by the Special Procedures mandate holders etc.

Regrettably, the HRC, OHCHR and special procedure mandate holders, despite having all relevant instruments to fulfill their mandate, are deprived of effective mechanisms to assess the situation of rights of women and girls in the occupied/conflict-affected territories beyond the central Government’s effective control. The vivid example of the aforesaid is that despite the direct calls of the HRC annual resolution “Cooperation with Georgia” (34/37, 37/40, 40/28 and 43/37) and repeated efforts of the High Commissioner, the OHCHR and other international human rights mechanisms have been prevented from entering the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation - the power exercising effective control on the ground (which is clearly attested by the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights) – in order to monitor the human rights situation, including the rights of women and girls, therein.

**3. What measures would you recommend to help ensure sustainable, comprehensive and consistent attention to gender equality and human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, such as resolutions, UPR recommendations, Special procedures country visit reports, and the work of investigative bodies?**

In order to ensure sustainable, comprehensive and consistent attention to gender equality and human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, we would recommend maintaining this issue high on the agenda of the HRC via, among others, adopting relevant thematic resolution. At the same time it is of critical importance to give due consideration to ensuring the implementation of the relevant recommendations made by the HRC and its mechanisms.