

# WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: 15 YEARS OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND  
SECURITY AGENDA

MARÍA VILLELLAS ARIÑO

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## INTRODUCTION

In October 2015, the United Nations conducted a review process of the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS). Some 15 years after its adoption, what began as the first UN Security Council resolution on this issue has become the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; a broad action agenda for the inclusion of women and the gender perspective into peacebuilding efforts, made up of eight Security Council resolutions and numerous complementary regional and national instruments. To carry out this review, a comprehensive independent study was produced, coordinated by Radhika Coomaraswamy, and governments held an open debate at the Security Council in which they assessed progress and presented new commitments to continue moving forwards in the implementation of the agenda. For its part, civil society, a key player in this issue, has also carried out its own evaluation process, noting that despite the progress and the recognition achieved by the WPS agenda, the gap between commitments and reality is still too wide for a positive assessment to be made. Women are still absent from peace processes and decision-making areas; gender-based violence within armed conflicts is a flagrant reality that does not receive enough attention; and militarist responses still prevail over those aimed at prevention and above options of a transformational nature directed at overcoming armed conflicts. Women's organisations initiated the process that led to the adoption of UNSCR 1325, with the aim of strengthening the tools for conflict prevention and peace building so as to bring an end to wars. 15 years later, the range of actors that have joined this agenda is extremely broad, with governments and the United Nations having taken on a visible role. This report reviews the process of the creation and consolidation of the WPS agenda and discusses some of the main challenges that are faced for its full implementation.

## 1. THE ORIGINS: UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

In October 2000 the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on WPS. The adoption of this resolution marked a turning point in the inclusion of women and the gender perspective in peacebuilding efforts and initiated the international WPS agenda. UNSCR 1325 recognised the right of women to actively participate in peacebuilding and in the prevention of violent conflicts, as well as to be included in the areas of decision making and in peacekeeping missions. At the same time, it highlighted the specific protection needs of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. Thus, UNSCR 1325 includes two key areas: the recognition of the gender-specific impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the role they can play in peacebuilding, understood in a broad sense (Villellas 2010).

Although historically there is a long tradition of women working for peace and international security, it was not until the 1990s that this issue began to acquire more importance and become more visible on the international agenda. But many decades before, women had made strong demands to be able to influence international issues and had fully demonstrated their ability to do so. One of the most significant moments occurred in 1915, during the First World War, when 1,300 women from 12 belligerent and non belligerent countries met at The Hague to demand an end to the war that was then ravaging Europe. They were women who belonged to the suffragist movement who had decided not line up with their governments in supporting the war. From that meeting the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was born and since then it has played a central role in defending women's participation in international affairs and even in the approval of UNSCR 1325 itself (Confortini 2012).

During the 1970s —basically as a result of the impetus given by the international feminist movement— the United Nations committed itself to promoting gender equality and women's rights and in 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted. This has become the fundamental international legal framework for matters of equality. In the introduction of the convention itself there is recognition that the strengthening of peace and international security contribute to full equality between men and women and that, at the same time, women's participation in all areas is indispensable for the achievement of peace.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations, brought together thousands of women from around the world in a meeting that marked a major turning point in the international agenda for gender equality. The adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action gave the issue a great deal of visibility, since one of the areas of particular concern was that of women and armed conflict, although at that time with an emphasis on women's status as victims rather than as active subjects. In 1998 this issue began to acquire greater force during the review of this area in the framework of the session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

With this momentum, UNSCR 1325 arose in the year 2000 as a result of the broad effort by women's organisations to ensure that the matter of WPS was considered an important issue in the international arena, and also because of their ability to weave alliances with different actors, including the UN and governments.<sup>1</sup>

In 2000 two important events took place in this preparation process for UNSCR 1325, which were the holding of Beijing+5 and a new annual session of the CSW. Anwarul Chowdhury, the Ambassador of Bangladesh, the country then presiding over the Security Council, made an important speech in which he emphasised the close relationship between equality, development and peace and the importance of the active participation of women in these areas. The group known as the Women and Armed Conflict Caucus, which brought together various international organisations, saw the opportunity to raise this issue at the UN Security Council, placing it on the agenda of this body. Women's organisations active in this field tried to give a strong impulse to the matter, presenting proposals and strengthening their coordination by creating in May 2000 the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWGWPS).<sup>2</sup> Their objective was to promote a UN Security Council resolution on WPS. The WILPF coordinated the group as it had done with the Caucus. Following several months of intense lobbying work, in September 2000, Namibia announced that under its presidency the Security Council would hold an open session on WPS.<sup>3</sup> Women experts

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<sup>1</sup> The gestation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security has been documented by different authors. The following works can be consulted for a detailed explanation of the process: Felicity Hill et al 2003; Cockburn 2007; Shepherd 2008; Porter 2012; Cohn et al 2004; Magallón 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The NGOWGWPS was initially made up of Amnesty International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), International Alert, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Hague Appeal for Peace. It currently consists of Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; International Rescue Committee; Madre; Open Society Foundations; Refugees International; Women's Action for New Directions; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; and the Women's Refugee Commission.

<sup>3</sup> Namibia had hosted the meeting that led to the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration and of the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations. (S/2000/693).



and civil society representatives participated in an “Arria formula” meeting<sup>4</sup> in which they made known to member states the serious impact of armed conflicts on women, as well as the important peacebuilding work that women were carrying out worldwide. On 31 October, UN Security Council approval of UNSCR 1325 on WPS was finally achieved: with that “the last bastion of gender-free thinking in the UN” had been opened up (Felicity Hill, cited in Cockburn 2007).

#### UNSCR 1325

- Urges the UN Secretary-General and Member States to ensure an increased representation of women in all ambits of peacebuilding, including the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.
- Expresses the willingness of the Security Council to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.
- Calls for Member States to be provided with training materials on the protection of women and for an increase in the provision of resources for this training.
- Calls on all actors involved in peace negotiations to include the gender perspective in peace agreements.
- Calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect international law, to end impunity and to adopt measures to protect women.
- Emphasises the civil status of refugee camps.
- Encourages the consideration of the needs of women and their dependents in processes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.
- Expresses its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and consult with local and international women’s groups.
- Calls on the Secretary-General to conduct a study and report on the impact of conflicts on women and on the role of women in peace-building.

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<sup>4</sup> Such meetings are “very informal, confidential gatherings which enable Security Council members to have a frank and private exchange of views, within a flexible procedural framework, with persons whom the inviting member or members of the Council (who also act as the facilitators or conveners) believe it would be beneficial to hear and/or to whom they may wish to convey a message. They provide interested Council members an opportunity to engage in a direct dialogue with high representatives of Governments and international organisations — often at the latter’s request — as well as non-State parties, on matters with which they are concerned and which fall within the purview of responsibility of the Security Council.” (United Nations Security Council).

## 2. BROADENING PERSPECTIVES: THE WPS AGENDA

As noted above, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 marked the beginning of the international WPS agenda. Following this first UNSCR, the Security Council has adopted seven additional resolutions that have expanded and complemented the first one, turning its content and concepts into reality.

In 2008, UNSCR 1820 was adopted, marking what would thereafter be one of the main items on the agenda: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. The resolution points to sexual violence as a weapon and tactic in war and acknowledges that it can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or could be an act of genocide. It calls for armed forces to be trained in the prevention of, and in responses to, sexual violence, and for there to be a greater deployment of women in peacekeeping operations. This was followed in 2009 by UNSCR 1888, which established the figure of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and which calls for the creation of a team of experts to deal with the most alarming situations; then by UNSCR 1889 (2009) which focuses on the participation of women in peace processes and on post-war peacebuilding, and calls for the development of indicators to evaluate the implementation of UNSCR 1325; by UNSCR 1960 (2010) which also focuses on sexual violence in armed conflict, establishing the mechanism for the Secretary-General to provide detailed information of those parties in conflict credibly suspected of being responsible for acts of sexual violence and includes criteria on sexual violence in sanctions mechanisms; and by UNSCR 2106 (2013), whose objective is to put into operation the obligations concerning the battle against sexual violence, emphasising the involvement of women in this process.

UNSCR 2122 (2013) recognises the need for greater emphasis on the leadership and participation of women, for addressing the root causes of armed conflicts and of threats to the security of women and girls through an integrated approach to sustainable peace, covering the political dimensions of security, development, human rights — including gender equality — the rule of law and justice. The UNSCR also notes the link between disarmament and gender equality. An important point of the UNSCR was the call for a comprehensive high level review in 2015 to assess the progress that has been made at a worldwide, regional and national level in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, to renew

commitments and to address the obstacles and constraints faced when implementing this resolution.

UNSCR 2242 (2015) was approved as part of the high level 15 year review process on the implementation of the WPS agenda. It addresses several important issues such as the urgency of adequately funding this implementation, it raises the importance of the gender dimension being truly integrated into the analysis and the work of different UN organisations, it highlights the need to strengthen the involvement of civil society, it calls for increased funding for the agenda of WPS and calls for greater integration of the WPS agenda within the so-called fight against terrorism and the fight against violent extremism.

The approval both of UNSCR 1325 and of the subsequent resolutions committed the Secretary-General and the Security Council to remain actively seized of the matter and to monitor their implementation. In 2002, the Secretary-General presented his first report on WPS, which has since become an annual document.<sup>5</sup> That same year saw the presentation of an assessment study carried out by independent experts into the impact of armed conflict on women and the role of women in peacebuilding (Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf 2002) and of a study on WPS coordinated by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (United Nations 2002).

Especially important has been the carrying out of the Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, coordinated by Radhika Coomaraswamy. This study represents a very extensive analysis of the evolution of the WPS agenda, as well as of the main challenges for its real implementation, analysing the set of issues that make it up, including women's participation, the protection of women's rights, peacekeeping, post-war reconstruction, the prevention of armed conflict and the integration of the WPS agenda into the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, among other issues. The study includes a comprehensive set of recommendations for all actors involved, especially the member states and the United Nations, of both a political and a technical nature. In addition, it brings together substantial evidence regarding the positive impact of the presence of women and of the inclusion of a gender perspective on the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, making this study a key tool of analysis and advocacy for the WPS agenda.

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<sup>5</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security S/2002/1154 <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/2002/1154&Lang=E>

### Recommendations of the Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325

1. No to militarisation: Yes to prevention.
2. The WPS agenda must be respected as a human rights mandate.
3. Peace processes mediators and the leadership of UN field missions must be proactive with regard to women's participation: the presence of women makes peace sustainable.
4. Perpetrators must be punished and justice must be transformative.
5. The localisation of peacebuilding programmes must involve the participation of women at every level and be supplemented by comprehensive security plans to protect women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.
6. Funding women peacebuilders and respecting their agency is an important way to counter extremism.
7. All key actors must play their role.
8. Toward a well-informed Security Council that applies a gender lens to all issues that come before it.
9. Across the board, 15 per cent of all funding for peace and security to be earmarked for programmes impacting women.
10. Toward a strong gender architecture at the United Nations.

Since the approval of UNSCR 1325, annual debates have also been conducted at the UN Security Council, in which states assessed the progress in its implementation. In October 2015 the open debate was held for the 15 year high-level review of the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and in that the Governments present announced specific commitments to promote the WPS agenda in the coming years. Following the adoption of UNSCR 1820 in 2008, Secretary-General's annual reports and the open debates in the Security Council on sexual violence in conflicts were added. In 2010 the Secretary-General presented a list of indicators for monitoring the implementation of 1325, in response to the demand for improved accountability mechanisms regarding the implementation of the resolution and following the specific requirement laid down by UNSCR 1889.<sup>6</sup> The indicators were grouped into four main areas: 1) prevention, 2) participation, 3) protection and 4) relief and recovery.

An important step was made in 2013 towards achieving greater consistency in the implementation of the WPS agendas, and of gender equality. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) adopted General recommendation number 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.<sup>7</sup> The recommendation aims to strengthen the implementation of the WPS agenda and to achieve better coordination with CEDAW. This is an important step because the States parties to the CEDAW Convention, when presenting their reports on

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<sup>6</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security S/2010/498  
<http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=s/2010/498&Lang=E>

<sup>7</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations*.  
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>

compliance with the convention, will have to report on measures taken to fulfil their commitments within the framework of the WPS agenda.

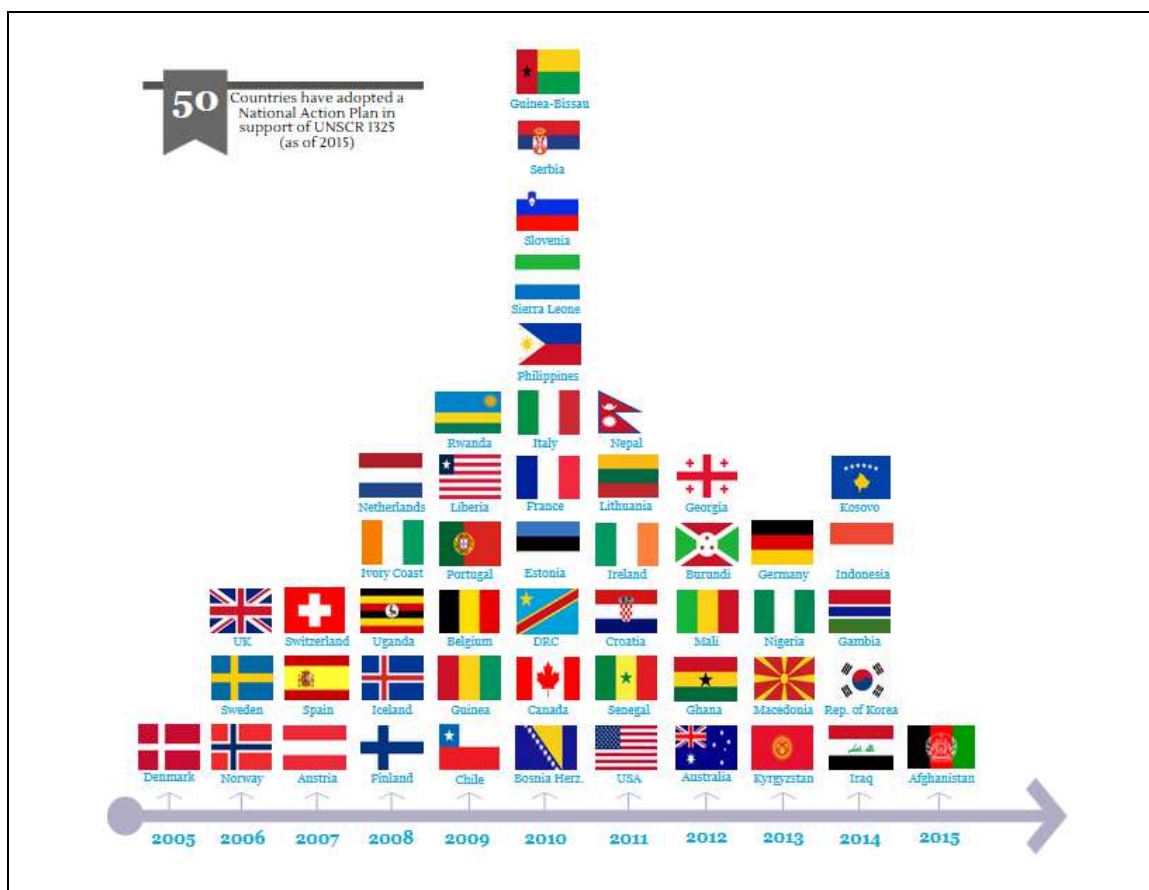
It must be highlighted the range of issues and areas of application included in this general recommendation, which includes questions such as “the application of the Convention to conflict prevention, international and non-international armed conflicts, situations of foreign occupation, as well as other forms of occupation and the post-conflict phase. In addition, the recommendation covers other situations of concern, such as internal disturbances, protracted and low-intensity civil strife, political strife, ethnic and communal violence, states of emergency and suppression of mass uprisings, war against terrorism and organised crime, that may not necessarily be classified as armed conflict under international humanitarian law and which result in serious violations of women’s rights and are of particular concern to the Committee”, some of which are included in the resolutions of the Security Council. A particularly important issue is that of financing, since the recommendation indicates that states need to properly fund the implementation of the resolutions on WPS, which should lead to states having to report to the CEDAW committee on their budgets for this purpose (Harris Rimmer 2014).

The process of the institutionalisation of the WPS agenda and its development through new resolutions and the creation of a certain institutional architecture has led to a situation where both states and some international and regional organisations have entered this process, creating their own instruments for the implementation of the resolution. As will be explained below, this process is complex and not lacking in challenges, debates and questions.

National Action Plans (NAPs) have been one of the main mechanisms for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 over the last 15 years (Florea Hudson 2013). Up until mid 2015, 50 countries had approved a NAP with the objective of adapting the contents of the WPS agenda to their local context (see Figure 1). The NAP is a tool that allows governments to articulate their policy priorities and coordinate the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at a national level (Peacewomen 2013). These documents define what policies and what processes a country must follow so as to achieve the proposed objectives and goals: they “outline strategies, identify priority areas, assign roles, establish timelines, construct indicators, and determine a means of measurement and evaluation.” (Miller et al. 2014). Although it is governments that must lead the process because they are primarily responsible for implementing the policies that derive from each NAP, the interaction between different actors, and especially civil society, is essential for good design, implementation, operation and evaluation of any NAP. Denmark was the first country to approve a NAP, ushering in a first period in which it was primarily European countries that took the initiative of developing these instruments. Ivory Coast, Liberia and Uganda were the first countries affected by

situations of violence to adopt their own NAP, thus broadening also their geographic coverage. Thus, Europe was followed by Africa; then the Americas, with the first plan being approved by Chile in 2009; and finally Asia in 2010, with the approval of a NAP by the Philippines.

Figure 1. Countries that have adopted National Action Plans



Source: Peacewomen <http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>

Some of the main difficulties and challenges associated with the implementation of a NAP and of a national WPS agenda have been common to the countries that have opted do to this. With respect to a NAP, it is important to insist that this should not be an end in itself. The formulation and the approval of a NAP do not in themselves represent the implementation of 1325 (Miller et al. 2014); they must rather be accompanied by the real and substantive application of the objectives laid down in 1325. The recommendations carried out by NGOWGWPS for the high-level review process in October 2015 allowed to identify some of the major challenges that are faced for the effective implementation of the WPS agenda (NGOWGWPS, 2015). First, the inclusion of civil society and other relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process. Although some NAPs, such as Nepal’s, have been outstanding for having been established through a broad and inclusive process (Brethfeld et al. 2012), the fact is that in many

cases civil society has remained on the sidelines of the design, implementation and evaluation of these plans. Better coordination is also required between the various relevant actors, as well as the putting in place of results-oriented evaluation mechanisms.

Financing is one of the crucial issues concerning the WPS agenda. Between 2002 and 2012 the funding allocated specifically for this purpose was on average approximately \$459 million a year, although in 2011 and 2012 this amount rose to \$849 million (Lopez Treussart & Piedmont 2014). Most governments do not reserve specific funds for their NAP or for the WPS agenda and existing funding is subject to the changes in political priorities brought by each government (Raaber 2014). It is thus urgent to improve the financing mechanisms so as to ensure effective funding. One of the proposals of the Women, Peace, and Security Financing Discussion Group is the creation of a fund or “Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security” which, alongside national funding mechanisms, could contribute to the sustainability of the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The proposal is to include donors, countries in conflict, civil society and the United Nations, with the aim of facilitating international funding for governments and civil society, and especially for the women’s organisations that lead the WPS agenda.

Increasing top level political commitment to the WPS agenda is another pending task which must go hand in hand with improved coordination with the different government bodies, including local government and traditional authorities where relevant. Without strong political will, progress in gender equality and in the WPS agenda will continue to be erratic and will be at the mercy of the political vicissitudes of each country. Furthermore, implementation should be completely in line with established international standards regarding gender equality and human rights.

On the other hand, alongside the implementation by UN Member States, supranational organisations have also developed different implementation mechanisms at a regional level. In 2008 the EU adopted the *Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security*. The EU has developed its own policy regarding WPS, with also its own evaluation tools, including indicators.<sup>8</sup> Other significant examples of the regional implementation of UNSCR 1325 are the *Pacific Regional Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security 2012-2015*; the *African Union Gender Policy* of 2009, which includes references to 1325; or the *Dakar Declaration and ECOWAS Plan of Action for the Implementation of UN SCRs 1325 and 1820 in West Africa*, of 2010. These mechanisms and processes also face challenges similar to those mentioned above.

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<sup>8</sup> Indicators for the Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security.

### 3. UNSCR 1325 IN SPAIN

In 2007 the *Action Plan of the Government of Spain for the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the Security Council of the United Nations (2000) on Women, Peace and Security* was approved. The Spanish NAP has six main objectives:

- 1) Strengthen women's participation in peace missions and in their decision-making bodies.
- 2) Promote the inclusion of a gender perspective in all peacebuilding activities.
- 3) Ensure the specific training of personnel involved in peace operations, on equality and on the different aspects of UNSCR 1325, as well as to promote knowledge and dissemination of this document.
- 4) Protect the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict zones (including refugee and displaced persons' camps) and to promote the empowerment and participation of women in the processes of negotiation and implementation of peace agreements.
- 5) Incorporate the principle of equality of treatment and opportunities between men and women in the planning and implementation of activities for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), as well as to give specialised training in this regard for all staff involved in these processes.
- 6) Encourage the participation of Spanish civil society in relation to UNSCR 1325.

The Plan calls for the participation of various ministries whose areas of work fall within the scope of 1325, through the creation of an inter-ministerial group made up of representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (including the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development, the AECID), Defence, Labour and Social Affairs (including the Institute for Women), Interior, Justice, Education and Science, and Health and Consumer Affairs, and was chaired at that time by the unit for the promotion of equality policies of the Foreign Affairs ministry. The NAP calls for the presentation of an annual report containing the results of the follow up of implementation.<sup>9</sup> In 2009 AECID presented another instrument, the Action Plan

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<sup>9</sup> Since the adoption of the Spanish NAP in 2007, four monitoring reports have been presented: the first report in February 2010 including the actions of the government between November



for Women and Peace Building in Spanish Cooperation, with the aim of integrating the implementation of UNSCR 1325 into Spanish development policy.

However, the implementation of these plans has fallen to different government agencies without there having been much participation by civil society organisations, including those that work actively in the promotion and implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Since the adoption of the Spanish NAP, various civil society organisations have been following up its application and, while recognising the progress made, they have been critical of it for different reasons.<sup>10</sup> These organisations have highlighted issues such as the deeply militaristic approach that has accompanied the NAP, giving a central role in its implementation to the ministries of Defence and the Interior and systematically transforming the application of a gender perspective into proposals to increase the recruitment of women to police and security forces. They also point to the lack of a specific budgetary allocation for it to be put into effect, with the consequent weakness in its implementation. The organisations state that the follow up reports submitted by the government ignore the impact of the spending cuts on the implementation of the NAP, despite the fact that some especially significant areas such as international cooperation have been seriously affected by a drastic reduction in their budget. They also point out the lack of mechanisms to articulate the involvement of civil society, even though the NAP requires this, as well as the difficulties there have been to access information. Although various civil society organisations are actively involved in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, this involvement is not channelled through the NAP. At the same time, nor has an evaluation of implementation been carried out using the tools available, such as the indicators developed by the UN Secretary-General or the EU.

During 2015, the Spanish Government reiterated several times its commitment to the WPS agenda. The high-level review that took place under the Spanish presidency of the Security Council in October 2015 led to the adoption of UNSCR 2242, co-authored by the United Kingdom and co-sponsored by more than 70 countries. In the context of this debate, Spain committed itself to increase its efforts in the implementation of the WPS agenda, as well as to review its NAP. The approval of this resolution was preceded by some criticism, especially from civil society organisations that underlined the urgent

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2007 and September 2009; the second report in December 2010, covering activities between October 2009 and September 2010; and the third and fourth reports presented together as a single document in February 2014, which covered the period between October 2010 and December 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Since 2011 civil society bodies have presented various reports on the follow up of the implementation of resolution 1325 (Mesa 2011; Mesa 2013; CONGDE et al. 2014; GNWP 2012a; GNWP 2012b; GNWP 2011).

need to strengthen the implementation of the already existing resolutions, putting the focus on the elimination of gender inequality, rather than lengthening the list of resolutions and policy instruments (Aoláin 2015). In addition, the last minute change in the date of the Security Council debate revealed once again the difficulties, even of a logistical nature, faced by civil society organisations in their work on women peace and security.

## 4. CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AGENDA

# 4

The development of the WPS agenda has not been easy nor has it been free of tension. The involvement of multiple and very different actors has allowed a huge enrichment of the process, but has at the same time meant an immense and constant challenge. Thus, the relationship between member states, international organisations — especially the UN, but also others such as the EU and NATO — and civil society has been complex and has highlighted the different rhythms, attitudes, expectations and levels of commitment with respect to the content and the implementation of the agenda. As noted above, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 was made possible thanks to the coordinated efforts of all the actors involved. The subsequent steps forward in its implementation are also due in large part to this same combination of forces. However, over the last 15 years there have been important differences. The equality agenda, the commitment to women's rights, and progress in the eradication of inequality and discrimination can not be taken for granted and there are numerous voices that warn of setbacks in matters of equality that are visible at an international level.

One major disagreement revolves around the general framework provided by UNSCR 1325 and the amount of importance that needs to be given to certain individual issues, as opposed to taking a more overall approach. The most significant example is the disagreement about the degree of centrality that the issue of sexual violence should have on the agenda. UNSCR 1325 provided a broad framework within which many issues were included and which sought to question the patriarchal view of women as primarily passive victims of armed conflicts. The women's organisations that have led the process have devoted enormous effort to dismantling this idea which does not correspond to a much more complex reality, in which women have multiple roles and tasks. In the real world, women are not always victims and still less passive. Sometimes they are active agents of violence or play a key role in peacebuilding and overcoming violence. The adoption of UNSCR 1820 put the role of women as the victims of armed conflicts back at the centre of the debate, by emphasising the aspects of protection and assistance above those of participation and prevention. Women's organisations recognise that sexual violence is a matter of the utmost gravity, but criticise the reductionist vision that has underlined the treatment of such a complex issue, pointing out the need to adopt a much broader perspective.

One example of the simplification of the phenomenon of sexual violence, while giving this a central place on the agenda, was the London summit on sexual violence that took place in 2014 under the auspices of the British Government. Many experts agree that while giving visibility to such a serious matter was a valuable contribution, reductionism was visible in the official speeches. The summit basically dealt with sexual violence in conflicts without placing this sexual violence within the context of ongoing violence suffered by women throughout the world, nor was it made clear that not all sexual violence that occurs within situations of war is actually a weapon of war. In addition, the emphasis on sexual violence as a threat to security could lead once again to reinforcing the view of women as victims who must be protected by military actors, most of whom are men. On the occasion of the summit, experts in the study of sexual violence in conflicts highlighted the importance of dealing with the issue on the basis of a recognition of its complexity and putting the emphasis on prevention, rather than seeing the punishment of the perpetrators as the only effective measure (Hoover Green 2014; Goetz 2014; The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict in 2014; Williams 2014).

However, after this tension having played an important part in the debate for years, the adoption of UNSCR 2122 in 2013 could point to a certain change (Shepherd 2014). The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stressed that the adoption of this resolution brought recognition for the first time to the importance of opting for a global, integrated approach, as women organisations had been calling for. The resolution also expresses the Security Council's concern that unless there is a significant change in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, women and their point of view will remain underrepresented in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in the protection and consolidation of peace. Thus, the issues of participation and leadership once again occupied a more central position.

Another of the areas on which there was a major difference is the question of militarism and the role played by armed actors in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. As Cynthia Cockburn (2012) states forcefully, UNSCR 1325 is an "example of how a good feminist work can be manipulated by a patriarchal and militarist institution", referring to the way in which NATO has used the resolution. For the women's organisations that promoted the adoption of the resolution and that have subsequently worked tirelessly for its effective implementation, the militarisation of 1325 has been one of their central concerns. According to the analysis of this author and activist, UNSCR 1325 does not call for more women in the army but rather "urges the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel." However, some governments and international organisations have put great emphasis on increasing the presence of women in the armed forces as a way of implementing the resolution. In 2007, NATO began its work on the resolution that culminated in 2010 with the adoption of an Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and one of its main objectives is to increase the number of women in the

armed forces.

The question of militarism was one of the most difficult issues in the process of drafting the resolution itself. As stated by Cohn (2004), even the organisations that promoted the adoption of the resolution did not press for it to put militarism into question nor to raise the link between militarism and masculinity, since they considered that the Security Council would not accept that, given the idiosyncrasies of this organism. So although UNSCR 1325 is anti-militarist, its wording and provisions leave it co-optable by militarism (Cockburn 2012). That has happened on several occasions as exemplified by the use of 1325 by NATO. At the same time, the heterogeneity that characterises the civil society actors involved in the implementation and defence of 1325 has also meant that sometimes these actors have not been sufficiently critical of the global capitalist and neo-colonial structures that accompany militarism and that have serious implications for the ability of women to act in the face of armed conflicts (Pratt & Richter-Devroe 2011). Puechguirbal (2010) argues that 1325 has been used to co-opt gender dynamics in order to maintain the status quo of gender, while Cohn (2004) warns that the system of war has not been put into question. The tensions are, therefore, evident between those who point to the enormous transformational potential of 1325 while at the same time warning of the risk that it could be used to serve the interests of patriarchal and militaristic actors, and these same actors who promote a very specific discourse which supports certain interpretations of UNSCR 1325 which are far from its initially critical spirit.

Another of the most important challenges pointed out by many civil society organisations is the need to adopt broader approaches that can take us towards an agenda on gender, peace and security. Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 the incorporation of a gender perspective into the official discourse around WPS has mainly implied dealing with the specific needs of women and promoting their participation in traditionally male-dominated environments, but a genuine implementation of the gender perspective would require the roles and experiences of men to be taken into account (Wright 2014). The inclusion of a gender perspective allows a deep questioning of the structures and power relations that have led to discrimination and the exclusion of women through militarism and violence. So a real transformation would require a greater questioning of the violent masculinities and of the patriarchal system that sustain militarism and war and of the gender norms that lead to violent conflict (Wright 2014). The gender perspective also implies putting into question the heteronormative system that continues to present certain sexual identities as a security threat (Bean 2014; Shepherd & Sjöberg 2012). It is therefore necessary to widen the dialogue and the range of participants so as to establish a really inclusive and transformative agenda.

Furthermore, the international context within which the WPS agenda has developed

has been that of the expansion of what is known as the “global war on terror”, characterised by a significant militarisation of international relations. This question has managed to find its own place on the WPS agenda, coming to be a central element in UNSCR 2242. Its inclusion has generated enormous concern among women’s organisations. Civil society has shown its reservations concerning the danger that the WPS agenda may be used to justify armed action by governments, pointing also to the constant violations of human rights that there have been worldwide within the context of anti-terrorism measures. Examples such as the invasion of Afghanistan under the pretext, among other factors, of the defence of the rights of Afghan women, or the drastic worsening of the living conditions of Iraqi women following the invasion of their country, show that these are not minor risks. While it is true that, as local women’s organisations have themselves denounced, the situation of women in those countries that the international community considers to be affected by violent extremism is extremely precarious, and the impact of violence is constant and daily, women’s organisations consider it dangerous to make a distinction between extremist violence and other violence. In addition, they point out that the WPS agenda must aim to combat all forms of violence, placing prevention strategies and women’s empowerment at the centre.

Thus, there has been an enormous gap between governments’ rhetoric with respect to this agenda and real political practice. The lack of political will, the lack of effective funding, and the limited commitment to the evaluation of what was meant to be done in the framework of the international WPS agenda are examples of the enormous obstacles that women’s organisations have had to face up to over the last 15 years.

## CONCLUSIONS

15 years after the adoption of United Nations Security Council UNSCR 1325 it is important to make an assessment of this process which can point to lines of action to strengthen the WPS agenda. The transformation of this resolution into an agenda that represents a comprehensive program of action for the United Nations, governments and civil society is a remarkably successful result of the constant work of actors committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, especially civil society that has constantly pressed to try to turn the WPS agenda into a program with real and measurable results that go beyond words.

However, while recognising this success, the assessment by civil society is that many challenges still remain, and that the achievements are too limited. There is a general fatigue with a process that has become too “bureaucratized” and whose practical results are unclear. With eight resolutions already approved, women peacebuilders demand an end to the voting of resolutions, and instead for these to be implemented once and for all so that we can begin to see more changes and more progress on the ground. This feeling of frustration is produced in part by the fact that an excess of instruments does not necessarily imply a better implementation of UNSCR 1325, which laid down the political guidelines that should guide the WPS agenda. At the same time, there is also within civil society a certain sense of governments having co-opted the agenda. States are using the language of WPS without making any substantial changes in their peace and security policies and without dedicating the necessary resources, and on occasions in order to legitimise certain military actions. Issues such as the fight against violent extremism and the so-called fight against terrorism are a clear example of this. While it is true that women around the world are severely impacted by violence and that certain armed groups such as, for example, ISIS have flagrantly violated the rights of women, all wars have grave gender impacts, regardless of the multiple causes that bring them about. And the WPS agenda cannot be used to cover up the militaristic policies of many governments which have also led to very serious consequences for women in many countries.

There is a need for much clearer commitments by governments. If they truly want to implement the WPS agenda, there are very specific points that must be put into practice: it is a question of political will. There has to be, with no further delay, an

increase in the number of women and more gender expertise in all decision-making positions, from the local to the international level. It is also essential to ensure the presence of women and of gender issues in all peace negotiations that seek to put an end to armed conflicts. The implementation of the agenda also requires the funding to make it possible; funding that does not depend on the specific interests of each government but rather follows the needs on the ground of the women who build peace: protection, participation, prevention, relief and recovery are the pillars that must guide the implementation of the agenda and they must receive sufficient support. National Action Plans have to be periodically reviewed and strengthened, with clear financial commitments and with accountability mechanisms that are transparent and participatory, and those countries that do not yet have one must initiate inclusive processes for their creation. Civil society must give priority to strategies for the creation and building of partnerships that afford the capacity to monitor and influence the action of governments.

15 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, a change of focus is urgently needed. Civil society demands a clear commitment to demilitarisation, disarmament and conflict prevention. UNSCR 1325 was created as an instrument that would contribute to ending wars and must be interpreted as such by governments and by the United Nations, giving priority to conflict prevention over militarism and the use of force. As pointed out by the Global Study, UNSCR 1325 is a mandate for human rights, since the protection of the rights of women around the world is one of the most effective tools for peacebuilding.



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