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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

WILPF is pleased to share this brief guide to the October 2016 Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security. Please use this as guidance for your advocacy efforts locally, nationally, and regionally, to demand a feminist foreign policy that puts commitments into action!

OVERVIEW OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORT ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

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The UN Secretary-General's [2016 Report on Women Peace and Security](#) (WPS) tracks the progress made on the implementation of [UNSCR 1325](#) (2000), pursuant to recommendations and commitments made at the [2015 High Level Review](#) and [Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325](#). It was compiled through the analysis of data provided by United Nations offices, civil society and regional organisations, and Member States.

I. REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

The Secretary-General identified increases in women's inclusion to peace processes, gender sensitive training in the security sector, and [1325 National Action Plans](#) (NAPs), among the year's positive outcomes. On the other hand, areas of concern included widespread conflict-related sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and a continued resistance to protecting women's human rights. Notable themes in the document are as follows:

- **On Civil Society-** The report highlighted the vital contributions of civil society organisations and local actors. At multiple stages of the report, the Secretary-General praised the contributions of civil society actors at local and regional levels, and called for increased funding and linkages with national and formal processes. The Secretary-General also noted that while the inclusion of civil society organisations and women peacebuilders are vital to the Security Council's work, as of 2016, no civil society organisations have been included in country specific briefings.
- **On Disarmament:** The Secretary-General identified the illicit transfer of arms as a force of destabilisation and highlighted the disproportionate impact of arms proliferation on women and girls. The report advocated for a gender-responsive approach to both disarmament and demobilisation, as well as for the full participation of women in preventing and combatting illicit transfers.
- **On WPS Financing-** The Secretary-General awarded significant attention to [WPS financing](#). The need for increased funding was incorporated throughout the document: advising readers to invest in overall peace, for military spending to be reallocated to the WPS agenda, and encouraging funding local and civil society actors. In addition, the report offered practical solutions for accomplishing these transfers, including the names of specific mechanisms and funds such as the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Marker](#), the [Global Acceleration Instrument \(GAI\)](#) on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, the Peacebuilding Fund's third [Gender Promotion Initiative \(GPI\)](#), and the [Joint Peace Fund](#).
- **On Participation:** With the exception of SGBV, the Secretary-General afforded more attention to Participation than any other WILPF PeaceWomen theme. The dialogue extended beyond political representation to the participation of women in peace processes, UN field missions and leadership roles, and disarmament efforts. The



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report advocated for inclusion of women at national and local levels in both the public and private sector to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all aspects of peace and security efforts.

- **On Human Rights-** As recent works have illustrated, the greatest indicator of a state's security is the treatment of women. As such, the focus on overall human rights in the Secretary-General's report successfully correlates with the empirical data on the topic; respect for women's rights is the keystone for so many other themes, and must be emphasised throughout all levels of society and governance.

II. SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Peace Processes**

Overall, the Secretary-General pronounced global efforts to ensure participation as varied. A majority of UN-led mediations in 2015 saw the increased participation of women in negotiating parties and active processes, leading to 70 percent of peace agreements included gender-specific provisions in 2015. However, these efforts fall short of being standard practice and require continued cultivation.

Suggested action steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Utilise forums such as the [Peace Research Institute Oslo](#) (PRIO) and the [Crisis Management Initiative](#) (CMI) to facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices
- Increase participation through initiatives such as the [Nordic Women's Peace Mediators' Network](#) or UN Women and the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) [Joint Gender and Mediation Strategy](#)
- Incorporate gender advisors and experts to mediation efforts through The United Nations [Standby Team of Mediation Experts](#), the [Roster of Mediation Advisors](#), the [European External Action Service's](#)

- **Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Crises**

Within peacekeeping and humanitarian crises, the report underscored the continuation of SGBV in conflict and extremism, the lack of access for survivors to vital physical and mental health services, the considerable scale of conflict related displacement, abuses committed by peacekeeping forces and aid workers, and exacerbated gender gaps in education, economic resources, and socio-legal services as a result of conflict.

Suggested action steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Recognise that sexual violence in conflict is part of a continuum of violence stemming from broader gender inequality.
- Practical reforms in refugee and internal displacement (IDP) camps such as the establishment of safe spaces, access to food distribution resources, awareness raising, and employment services.
- Education as a means of empowerment
- The inclusion of gender perspectives in all peacekeeping operation reviews
- The utilisation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [Gender Task Force and Special Coordinator](#) to ensure oversight and accountability, mainstream investigations, as well as provide training and technical support.

- **Countering Violent Extremism**

The Secretary-General illustrated that while the consequences of terrorism, like conflict, affect men and women in different ways, many extremist groups like Islamic State of



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Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and Boko Haram expressly target women's rights. Pursuant to [UNSCR 2242](#), the report encourages the participation of women in counter-terrorism efforts and the inclusion of gender as an intersecting issue in countering extremism.

Suggested action steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Consulting women's organisations in counter-terrorism strategies in accordance with the Secretary-General's [Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#)
- Generating evidence regarding the drivers of terrorism
- Dedicate funding to gender-equality in counter-terrorism efforts
- Ensure that the gender-specific crimes perpetrated by these groups be prosecuted under international law.

- **Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding**

Within the scope of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the Secretary-General emphasised economic recovery, governance and participation, disarmament and demobilisation, access to justice, and gender responsive transitions.

Suggested action steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Address gender gaps in access to natural resources, employment, land rights, and other economic variables, the report empower access through business training, asset creation, legal aid, and micro-financing.
- Facilitate the implementation of state commitments to equal gender representation in governing bodies, through the adoption of legislative quotas and [electoral assistance efforts](#) like those of UNDP and UN Women.
- Increased participation of women at local levels
- Adopt a gender sensitive perspective in informal efforts to prevent violence and stabilisation efforts.
- Increase access to justice through the utilisation of SGBV experts, frameworks for documenting crimes such as fact-finding missions, truth commissions, reparations programmes for survivors, and strengthening rule of law through joint programmes like those offered by the [Global Focal Point for Police, Justice, and Corrections \(GFP\)](#).

- **Disarmament and Demobilisation**

The Secretary-General highlighted a number of achievements in disarmament and demobilisation in 2015, including the development of the Office of Disarmament Affairs' (UNODA) [Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan](#), the increased use of national focal points and coordination agencies, and a rise in ratifications of the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) (ATT). The report drew attention to the negative impact of arms trafficking on women and girls and the mixed progress among states to control small arms and light weapons (SALW). Additionally, the report emphasised the importance of integrating a gender perspective in [Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration](#) (DDR) programmes.

Suggested Action Steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Track the proportion of DDR beneficiaries who are women as well as the proportion of funds they receive.
- Facilitate the implementation of the ATT through resources such as the UNODA [toolkit](#).
- States must ensure women's participation in combatting the arms trade

Implementation



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The Secretary-General focused on the roles of member states, the UN, and the security council in his dialogue on implementation, and drew additional attention to women's representation in the UN, gender expertise, and WPS financing. The Secretary-General highlighted his appointment of multiple women to leadership positions, the increased use of the [Convention to End Discrimination Against All Women](#) (CEDAW) committee review process, increased numbers of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, and the incorporation of the WPS agenda in Security Council Resolutions and peacekeeping operations, as achievements in implementation.

Suggested action steps to address persisting barriers were identified as follows:

- Increase Participation rates through targeted outreach, gender-mainstreaming selection processes, and utilising initiatives like the [Senior Women Talent Pipeline](#).
- Adoption of gender units and focal points in peacekeeping missions, women protection advisers, and inter-agency groups dedicated to gender and human rights in conflict and post-conflict states.
- Collaborate with civil society and local women's organisations, and to utilise the Informal Expert Group (IEG) 2242 as a tool for progress.
- Vast military expenditures should be diverted to gender and peace focused investments
- Development banks should direct more financing to gender issues.
- Screening budgets through [Gender Marking Systems](#)
- Actors should move away from aid allocations to broad 'gender equality' and instead increase support for specialised and local funds

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The Secretary General's report affirmed that although the normative commitment on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is growing -- as recognized by the record numbers in 2015 WPS debate speakers, civil society speakers, and UNSCR 2242 resolution co-sponsors -- there is still a gap on shifts in action. To conclude, the report outlined five priority areas of action:

- Ensure women's participation and leadership in all aspects of peace and security efforts
- Respect and promote women's human rights during and after conflict
- Mainstream gender throughout peace and security monitoring and planning
- Build a strong infrastructure for gender issues and emphasise gender expertise
- Finance the Women Peace and Security Agenda

The time is now to step up.