

The U.N S.C Resolution 1325: What effective impact for Congolese Women?
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August 29, 2007 - The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 has undoubtedly influenced opinion on the issue of the contribution of women to peace and security in the world.

The department of Peacekeeping operations has taken decisive steps in the implementation of the SCR 1325. This is the case for the operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where gender experts play an important role in putting these questions at the center of Peacekeeping operations work. This resolution has become a model of activities to ensure the protection of women by the Peacekeeping operations.

Although, progress have been made in the 12 critical fields of actions, there is a persistence of violence against women, a low level of representation in the political arena, the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic among women and young girls; the impact of gender based violence and, their representative absence from the peace process.

Seven years after SCR 1325 was adopted, the gap continues to grow between, on one side, the laws and the conventions on fundamental rights at the international level and on the other those on the national level. There is still a very large difference between policies and practice.

Congolese women, particularly those living in the east of the DRC continue to be victims of armed conflicts, in spite of the efforts and interventions of the international community to punish the crimes committed against them.

Articles 1, 2 and 8 of SCR 1325 take into account representation of women in decision-making positions and in peace processes. Despite the existence of these provisions, there is in reality ineffective application of this legal principle.

The culture of impunity, which benefits perpetrators of violence against women, blocks their participation in the rebuilding processes of the DRC. This resolution should be

implemented so that the violent crimes against women and girls are subjected to penal sanctions.

The United Nations Security Council missions and PK missions to the DRC should always work with local, regional and national non-governmental associations working for peace and human security. Furthermore, the missions should take into account the needs and priorities of all those who are concerned. In effect, there is insufficient synergy observed between those acting and working on the question of peace and security. Needs are best expressed by those who require it.

From a disparity point of view, the inequality between men and women, in the DRC, remains striking. The statistics are clear from the table below. They highlight the wide gap between the principle of significant representation of women in the recently established institutions and the absence of women in the peace process.

	TOTAL NO.	MEN	WOMEN	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
President of the Republic	1	1	0	0 % Women
National Assembly	500	458	42	8.4 % Women
Senat	108	103	5	4.6 % Women
Provincial Assembly	662	621	41	6.2 % Women
Territorial				
-Governors	11	11	0	0 % Women
-Vice Gov.	11	11	0	0 % Women
Government	60	51	9	15 % Women
TOTAL	1353	1256	97	7.2 % Women

Women continue to be under represented in the process of decision-making, which addresses challenges of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance operations, maintenance and consolidation of peace in the DRC.

This form of discrimination, as well as the violence directed at women constitute, in this respect, an attack on the freedom of people and an obstacle to equal opportunity, equity and peace, which are prerequisites for sustainable development.

Conclusions

The struggle remains, above all, that of Congolese women who must be the principal actors on the ground. However, they must be able to continue to count on and benefit from all actions, help and support of Congolese men, the U.N mission, international partners and institutions.

The problem of protection and security should be a way to promote change. All change must bring a response to UN SCR 1325 and offer women living conditions which will make them true citizens in the rebuilding of the DRC.

SCR 1325 would only be credible if it constitutes a crucial step in the DRC's policy guidelines and national legislations. Men and women would redefine these, together, taking into account the interest of half of the population, which is made up of the women.

A constitutional reform would allow the creation of adequate legal mechanisms to protect women from violence to which they are still widely exposed in DRC.

Furthermore, the Congolese State and the International Community have a duty towards all women in the DRC, to continue to work relentlessly for the implementation of the U.N Security Council Resolution 1325 and to make sure that it does not stand back.

Appointing women to positions of responsibilities is undoubtedly one of the key elements to maintain peace and security in the DRC. We are convinced that a lasting peace and sustainable development, as much as at the regional as at national level cannot be accomplished without women.

Recommendations

We avoid resulting recommendations which are too stereotypical and do not take into account the sufferings and needs of Congolese women, particularly in this instance to

draw hazardous conclusions due to the nature of the SCR 1325. However, we propose following recommendations:

- The appropriation of this unique SCR 1325 by Congolese women, as a fundamental instrument of lobbying and advocacy
- The use of SCR 1325 in coordination with International conventions, charter and declarations, agreements and texts in the process of peace in the DRC.
- The development of strong networks between various organizations in order to raise awareness
- Lobbying the DRC government to establish a national action plan for SCR 1325.
- Establishment of an observation committee made up of female international and national representatives to ensure gender mainstreaming at all levels.

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