

## WILPF's Launch of "Towards a Feminist Security Council" Guidance Note

*Summary of the 20 November 2018 Meeting of the Group of Friends of UNSCR1325*



*(Photo: WILPF)*

On 20 November 2018, the Group of Friends of UNSCR 1325 hosted a meeting to launch the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)'s "Towards a Feminist Security Council" Guidance Note. The discussion explored how to address longstanding gender bias in the Security Council by building on good practices to implement the Security Council's mandate, consistent with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The meeting was facilitated by Simon Collard-Wexler, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, which chairs the Group of Friends of UNSCR 1325. Briefers included: WILPF International President Joy Onyesoh, WILPF Women, Peace and Security Programme Director Abigail Ruane, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the United Nations Verónica Cordova Soria, and UN Women Chief of Peace and Security Paivi Kannisto.

Participants at the meeting agreed that we need to move beyond rhetorical commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and turn words into action. Simon Collard-Wexler, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Canada, opened the event by reiterating the importance of creating concrete actions. He said, "The Guidance Note is extremely helpful for us as it shows areas where we are doing well and where we need to improve." He also added, "It's not only about non-permanent members, but it's also about the actors within permanent missions and the broader UN System. Everyone needs to be engaging with and upholding the WPS Agenda." This thought guided the discussion throughout the event, focusing on the need to make systematic changes in the Security Council as well as in the wider UN system for action towards feminist peace.

Joy Onyesoh, WILPF International President, opened the discussion by sharing her definition of feminist peace based on her experience in global advocacy rooted in her home country of Nigeria. “Why do we need feminist peace?” she asked. “To ensure that women’s voices are heard.” She suggested that feminist peace - peace based on equality, justice and demilitarised security - should be at the core of the Security Council action if it is to fulfill its mandate under the UN Charter.

Abigail Ruane, WILPF Women, Peace and Security Programme Director, introduced the Guidance Note by emphasizing the importance of having a Security Council that works for women and all people. She gave an overview of the Guidance Note, highlighting the five areas of the Guidance Note which include: partnerships with women civil society, supporting local, national and regional leadership, prioritizing gender conflict analysis, ensuring action on disarmament and lastly, promoting transparent and democratic governance. She added, “Using this Guidance Note, Council Members can leverage existing working methods to address key gaps and support a shift from crisis response towards upstream conflict prevention and sustaining peace based on women’s participation, protection and rights.”

Verónica Cordova Soria, Deputy Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of Bolivia to the United Nations, spoke on Bolivia’s experience as a current elected member of the Security Council. She spoke to Bolivia’s experience hosting the annual Women, Peace and Security debate, where they focused on Promoting the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Sustaining Peace through Women's Political and Economic Empowerment. “We tried to bring to this [debate] topic the specific aspects I think are often left behind,” stated Cordova. “We tried to include the link of WPS with women’s political and economic empowerment and bring to light the patriarchal structures that prevent women from participating equally in the society.” She also highlighted the importance of taking responsibility to promote change. “If we are going towards a Feminist Security Council, it’s a long way to go,” she stated. “But there are steps that we can take in that direction.”

Paivi Kannisto, Chief of Peace and Security of UN Women, spoke to the advances the WPS Agenda has made as well as areas for improvement. She stated, “The Women, Peace and Security Agenda is critical for peace and security. It is an agenda for everyone.” She highlighted the progress made in gender-inclusive policies in peacekeeping operations, sanctions, embargoes and joint missions. She also reiterated the important role of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security as it has been creating a strong amount of gender analysis to be used by the Security Council. As for gaps to highlight, Kannisto stated, “Women’s human rights defenders, and every single CSO briefer is courageous because they face risks when they go back to their home country.” She also highlighted disarmament and economic aspects of peace as key gaps, along with limited analysis of early warning signs and trends.

Participants from the floor were appreciative of the Guidance Note and the action it aims to accelerate. Speaking about the importance of the Guidance Note, one of the participants stated, “This is great for our new members and old members. We cannot fix it if we do not know what we are doing wrong.” They also added, “When civil society briefs the Council, from a Council perspective, it is invaluable and it tremendously changes the tone.” Many speakers reiterated the importance of civil society voices, especially women’s voices, as crucial for the development of viable solutions. Participants also agreed that there needs to generally be more representation of women in the Council as Permanent Representatives and Deputy Permanent Representatives. Another point raised was the importance of the role of Elected Members of the Security Council in strengthening effectiveness of Council work, and the need for building consensus and institutional knowledge among elected members. and the role to build a practice and pass these practices onto other elected members.

Overall, participants agreed that everyone, from civil society to Member States to UN, can contribute to achieving, supporting and creating a Security Council that lives up to its mandate and engages in effective action for sustainable peace consistent with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Some recommendations included: ensuring that civil society briefings continue to be a regular part of Council work, capacitating men to be better allies in supporting women’s leadership and supporting implementation the WPS Agenda, and strengthening action that addresses gender in disarmament work. All actors have a role to play, whether it is bringing a gender conflict analysis into the Council, supporting civil society meaningful participation, or strengthening holistic action that supports women human rights defenders and strengthens action for accountability and implementation.

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The Guidance Note ‘Towards a Feminist Security Council’ can be downloaded on [peacewomen.org](http://peacewomen.org), which is WILPF’s online platform on Women, Peace and Security.