

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Room S-3800  
United Nations  
New York

23 April 2012

Dear Secretary-General,

I am writing on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security regarding the upcoming appointment of a new Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the position originally requested in Security Council Resolution 1888 (OP 4), and recently reaffirmed in Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2012/3.

The current Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has established a public profile for the office, and her work has included taking the system lead on such vital efforts in effectively addressing conflict-related sexual violence as early warning and analysis, including your recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2012/33).

As the Special Representative's office continues to develop its work, it is essential that your new Special Representative has the skills and experience to address the key challenges facing the mandate, including the knowledge and legitimacy to: be a strong voice for those affected by conflict-related sexual violence; hold perpetrators to account; guarantee the UN system and Member States are fulfilling responsibilities to prevent these crimes; and protect and be accountable to survivors. This requires going beyond addressing impunity for sexual violence: the Special Representative must also push seriously for strengthened participation, prevention, protection, and access to services for survivors of sexual violence.

With this in mind, the NGO Working Group respectfully asks the Secretary-General to ensure that the new Special Representative has the following:

- A track record as an independent vocal and effective advocate for women's human rights, particularly regarding conflict-related sexual violence;
- Substantial knowledge of the issue of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in terms of relevant international law, and the importance of women's empowerment in addressing the root causes of sexual violence;
- Significant experience working in this field, e.g. as a service provider or legal professional;
- Significant experience engaging and interacting with national security forces and other armed groups;
- Substantial operational knowledge of the UN system, and of current UN efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence; and has UN country/peacekeeping operations/force command experience;
- The authority to address gaps in the UN system, and to continue to drive efforts to improve collaboration within the UN on ending conflict-related sexual violence;
- Legitimacy with civil society, with whom this person must closely coordinate;
- The expertise necessary to lead work that safely, ethically and effectively engages with survivors of sexual violence;

- Commitment to ensuring that women, peace and security matters continue to be addressed in the security arena, and an understanding of the importance of human rights in this context; and
- The independence and political clout necessary to influence governments and other stakeholders to support the work of the Special Representative. This authority may be used to secure resources, including troop contributions, and to mobilize justice and health systems in conflict situations.

Finally, the NGO Working Group believes a qualified man can be an equally effective Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, though he may have to work harder to build trust with women's groups in conflict-affected countries.

We look forward to the appointment of your new Special Representative, and trust it will serve as a demonstration to the world of the United Nations' collective determination to address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Taylor  
Executive Coordinator, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

*On behalf of:*

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
CONSORTIUM ON GENDER, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
FEMMES AFRICA SOLIDARITÉ  
GLOBAL ACTION TO PREVENT WAR  
GLOBAL JUSTICE CENTER  
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH  
INTERNATIONAL ACTION NETWORK ON SMALL ARMS  
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE  
REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM OF THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL  
WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION  
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM