



**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**Policy Statement on Women, Peace and Security**

Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016

Women's participation is key to sustainable peace.<sup>1</sup> In conflict and non-conflict settings – at home and on the streets, women are severely affected by armed violence. While several initiatives have made progress in addressing violence in relation to women as well as promoting women's participation in peace and security, there is still much work to be done. Based on its over-all objective, to contribute to achievement of a more peaceful society through parliamentary action, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons thus finds it crucial to strengthen the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and calls for improved implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, a process where parliamentarians have a key role.

UNSCR 1325, adopted in 2000 and followed by several other UN Resolutions and initiatives, urges all member states to ensure “increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict”.<sup>2</sup> The implementation of UNSCR 1325 has seen significant progress in awareness-raising and creation of normative frameworks. For instance, in 2014 women's role in peace and security was referred to in over half of all signed peace agreements by the UN, which is a significant change to barely 16% in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

There has also been improvements related to disarmament and arms control instruments. The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by the United Nations General Assembly and the United

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<sup>1</sup> Global study on 1325 implementation “Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace”: <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000), p. 2, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000))

<sup>3</sup> Global study on 1325 implementation <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

Nations Program of Action (UNPoA)<sup>4</sup> are steps forward in recognizing the risk of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) being used in committing serious acts of gender-based violence, such as domestic, sexual and physical violence towards women.

However, many obstacles still remain. While there is substantial rhetoric that support the Women, Peace and Security agenda, progress towards limiting sexual violence, increasing women's participation in decision making processes and formulating plans for implementation have been limited. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) report 'Women, Weapons, and War' (2015)<sup>5</sup> also concludes that there is a continuous tendency to refer to women as vulnerable victims in need of protection, rather than as active agents in securing sustainable peace.

While all forms of weapons affect women's security, SALW are a particular threat as 60% of the global stock is owned privately, posing a serious threat to women and children involved in domestic violence at home with a high risk for women to become victims of violence. Women are often main actors in preventing domestic conflicts thereby playing an important role in peace-keeping and disarmament at local level. It is known that women often "play a crucial role in local policy-making and small arms monitoring activities".<sup>6</sup> However the risk of getting harassed injured or killed is immense.

The UN Global Study on implementation of UNSCR 1325 concludes that 'women's participation is key to sustainable peace'.<sup>7</sup> Women are not only victims of armed violence but can and should be involved in peace-making processes at all levels – at home and globally. If women's participation as active agents in decision-making on peace and security continues to be low, it means the world is missing out on valuable contributions to achieving sustainable peace.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda is thus central to the Forum's work both in thematic content as well as in terms of promoting the work of women parliamentarians and ensuring equal participation. Two previous Policy Statements specifically related to the issue - Policy Statements on Gender and SALW (2007) and Violence against Women (2009) – have been adopted where the impacts of SALW related violence towards women and the importance of women's participation was brought to the attention of parliamentarians.

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<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

<sup>5</sup> "Women Weapons and War – A gendered critique of international instruments"

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/women-weapons-war.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Women, Peace Security and Small Arms", <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2014/en/Small-Arms-Survey-2014-Chapter-2-EN.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Global study on 1325 implementation "Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace": <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

Parliamentarians are especially suited to tackle the uncontrolled proliferation and illicit ownership of SALW, by their legislative; oversight and awareness-raising functions. The Inter- Parliamentary Union (IPU) Resolution on “The role of parliaments in strengthening control of trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition”<sup>8</sup> focuses on several approaches such as changing national legislation on firearms, control and tracking of weapon supply and flow, and assistance for victims of gun violence and the gender perspective.

Given the important contributions women make to peace and security, it is vital that women parliamentarians are more involved in processes. However, only one in five of the world’s parliamentarians are women and regarding parliamentary work on Defence, Security or Foreign affairs, the numbers are even lower. In addition to this, recent research shows that many women MPs face widespread sexism, harassment and violence which further undermine gender equality as well as democracy as a whole<sup>9</sup>.

UNSCR 1325 is the blueprint for addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict and abuse on women. Therefore, the Parliamentary Forum highlights the importance of women’s equal participation in prevention and reduction of SALW related violence. It supports further development of the gender equality approach by strengthening the role of women parliamentarians both internally within the Forum as well as thematically.

Peace-keeping and –building processes need to include full participation and active involvement of women at all levels because they are active in promoting peace and security, in the home, nationally and internationally.

### *Objectives*

**The Board of the Parliamentary Forum of Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay on 24<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016:**

*Re-affirms* its support to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), *recognising* the progress made and *calls* for its full and immediate implementation;

*Promotes* women’s full and equal participation in decision-making processes on peace and security at national, regional and international levels;

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<sup>8</sup> “Missing pieces: A guide for reducing gun violence through parliamentary action”:

[http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/missing\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/missing_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> “Women Weapons and War – A gendered critique of international instruments”

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/women-weapons-war.pdf> and Inter-

Parliamentary Union - “Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians”

<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issuesbrief-e.pdf>

*Recognizes* that armed violence against women is a global problem and *understands* that adequate response and effective institutional arrangements to ensure women's participation in peace-building processes significantly contribute to international peace and security;

*Draws attention to* the fact that violence against women is clearly linked to proliferation of SALW and should be addressed in global security and development discussions and *encourages* an active participation for women in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes;

*Urges* the international community and other stakeholders to enhance political engagement and involvement in awareness-raising of problems related to violence against women;

*Acknowledges* the important role of women and women's organisations in addressing sexual violence issues and their potential in prevention actions and response for supporting sexual violence victims;

*Emphasizes* the important role of states, parliamentarians and the United Nations to establish reports and monitoring on armed conflict related sexual violence;

*Advocates* for judicial and legal reforms to support women and other victims of armed violence to reduce gender inequalities and give confidence to victims that are afraid of reporting sexual violence due to cultural, economic or security related issues;

*Urges* the Members of the Forum and their parliamentary colleagues to work towards creating necessary legislative frameworks to prevent violence against women and promote revisions and updates of existing national legislation on gender-based violence;

*Calls* on parliaments to define and apply policies and mechanisms to deter harassment and abuse towards women parliamentarians;

*Recognizes* the importance of understanding the impact of SALW on women which should lead to necessary policy changes to guarantee their safety and to distinguish the role women play in the disarmament agenda by assuring development of policy tools, capacity-building, legislation reform and awareness-raising,

*Mandates* the Forum, its Members and the Secretariat to undertake all necessary efforts towards effective implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.