Policy Brief

Women Transforming Peace in Peacekeeping Contexts

United Nations

ACTION
FOR PEACEKEEPING

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Executive Summary

The 20th anniversary since the adoption of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)[1] provides an opportunity to take stock on progress, evaluate the barriers and make forward looking recommendations to advance the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda in peacekeeping. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, all significant milestones for peace and security. These anniversaries come five years after the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) redoubled its efforts to prioritize the implementation of the WPS mandates and agenda as aligned to the various recommendations emanating from the 2015 peacekeeping reviews and normative frameworks, in particular the Report of the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (2015)[2] and UNSCR 2242 (2015)[3] .

In 2018, DPO adopted its Policy on Gender-Responsive Peacekeeping Operations[4], the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)[5] initiative and WPS accountability tools and measures were rolled out to peacekeeping missions as well as improved reporting guidelines. This transformative change dawned with the adoption of WPS priorities as a political imperative in the A4P

initiative; while the policy which is pivoted on enhancing and strengthening leadership and accountability remains as a key enabler to support collective implementation. Moreover, through the identification of the specific commitments within the A4P initiative, WPS is further reinforced, prioritized and centralized as an integrated theme across all the eight A4P priorities.

The implementation of the A4P WPS priorities has been sustained through high-level political advocacy, dedicated technical capacity and strong partnerships with local women leaders and women's organizations. Moreover, mission mandates have been incrementally informed by data driven analysis contributing to stronger WPS mandated tasks. The joint data driven data collection and analysis has also contributed to stronger internal accountability, coherence, coordination and ownership.

While there has been progress as outlined in this policy brief, the WPS agenda writ large is increasingly threatened by the lack of political will to actualize women's participation, limited financial investments, and limited accountability including the global push back on gender equality. To this end, this policy brief presents analysis and recommendations for peacekeeping partners and

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1   UN Security Council (October 31, 2000), *Resolution 1325: Women and Peace and Security,* S/RES/1325 (2000).

2   UN General Assembly, UN Security Council (2015), *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people* (A/70/95−S/2015/446).

3   UN Security Council (October 13, 2015), *Resolution 2242: Women and peace and security,* S/RES/2242 (2015).

4   UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN Department of Field Support (2018), *Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.*

5   See United Nations, *UN Secretary General's initiative on Action for Peacekeeping*: https://www.un.org/en/A4P/.

stakeholders to redouble the implementation of the WPS mandates. Moreover it builds on the UN Secretary- General's Call to Action[6], that makes an urgent rallying call to all stakeholders to embrace and build on feminist approaches to international peace and security and to enhance women's leadership and full participation to transform peace and security through the following actions:

A. **Prioritize and invest in community-based local women networks and organizations;** by empowering, creating synergies, resourcing, and investing in community-based local women networks and organizations as transformative partners and change makers.

B. **Accelerate and leverage women's mobilization to transform peace and political processes;** by recognizing the transformative vision of women's movements to challenge unequal power relations, harmful structural gender norms and value systems that perpetuate exclusion, we prioritize the inclusion of women rights defenders, women peacebuilders, women in security institutions, women ex-combatants, to assert their leadership in decision-making.

C. **Harness data and gender analysis for accountable decision-making:** By closing the data gaps, bridging the digital divide and recognizing the value of women's experiences, knowledge, understanding and expertise, we improve investments and accountability in decision-making, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness in sustaining peace.

D. **Create dynamic and innovative partnerships to enhance women's participation:** By forging creative partnerships for cooperation between policymakers and practitioners, and demonstrating political will, making resources available for technical gender experts we leverage our different comparative advantages to centralize women's direct participation in peace and political processes.

E. **Systemize women's leadership to influence conflict prevention, resolution and create a protective environment** that empowers women leaders, protects women human rights defenders and peacebuilders and recognizes their community-led conflict resolution efforts and mechanisms that reduce their heightened risks to sexual and gender-based violence and political violence.

This policy brief therefore draws from the implementation of the WPS commitments and mandated tasks in peacekeeping contexts from 2015 to 2020.

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6   UN Department of Peace Operations - Gender Unit (2020), Call to Action: Women transforming peace.

Introduction

For two decades, since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the nine consecutive resolutions[7]; robust institutional, national, regional and international policy and normative frameworks have been adopted to enhance the implementation of the WPS agenda in the international peace and security arena. These efforts have yielded mixed results; while some progress is evident, it has been slow, uneven and ridden with challenges and consistent worrying trends of regression and backtracking of the gains.

2015 was a significant point of departure for the implementation of the WPS agenda, particularly its strategic prioritization within the UN peace and security pillar. Needless to say, it was pivotal for DPO (then DPKO), as strategic independent peace operations reviews were conducted, more significantly the Report of the Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report[8]. The HIPPO report reflected on the growing recognition of the continued challenges faced by the UN peace operations in the wake of the ever-changing dynamics of conflict, the progress and challenges of the implementation of the WPS agenda globally. The 1325 Global Study (2015)[9] similarly also provided analysis on the implementation of the WPS agenda globally.

In the same year, the Security Council adopted UNSCR 2242 (2015)[10], a forward-looking resolution which embraced recommendations from the independent reports. Notably, UNSCR 2242 (2015) reiterated greater accountability and improved senior leadership, the need to invest in strategic partnerships with women leaders and networks, presence and seniority of mission level gender expertise and architecture, and dedicated mission level resources for implementation of WPS mandated tasks. In addition, the importance of systematically integrating a gender analysis into all strategic processes and planning was underscored, including the adoption of the UN Security Council's Informal Experts Group on WPS to enhance the stronger integration of WPS analysis in the Council's decision-making processes.

Moreover, in 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[11] adopted by world leaders in 2015, came into force providing the hinge between the WPS agenda and development through SDG5[12] and SDG16[13].

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7   1820 [2008], 1888 [2009], 1889 [2009], 1960 [2010], 2106 [2013], 2122 [2013], 2242 [2015], 2467 [2019] and 2493 [2019]

8   UN General Assembly, UN Security Council (2015), *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people* (A/70/95–S/2015/446).

9   Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.*

10   UN Security Council (October 13, 2015), *Resolution 2242: Women and peace and security,* S/RES/2242 (2015).

11   See United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

12   See United Nations, SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5.

13   See United Nations, SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16.

I. Implementing the women, peace and security agenda in peace operations

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

In response to the evolving political landscape and nature of conflicts, as well as UNSRC 2242 (2015) and the HIPPO recommendations; DPO launched its policy on gender-responsive peacekeeping operations[14]. The 2018 Policy reinforces DPO's commitments to accelerate and sustain the momentum on Women, Peace and Security[15], through strengthened accountability; enhanced data driven evidence generation; partnerships including with women's organizations and networks; and capacity building of all peacekeeping personnel; all mutually reinforcing themes that operationalize the UN Secretary-General's recommendations in his annual reports in the period between 2015-2020.

With the adoption of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping[16] initiative and the shared commitments[17] in 2018; WPS was further reinforced, prioritized and centralized as an integrated theme across the eight priorities and as a political imperative with a targeted focus on; 1) ensuring full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace process; 2) systematically integrating gender equality and WPS into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting; and 3) increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions.

The A4P framework, as a shared declaration of commitments has led to stronger partnerships with member states and regional partners on the WPS agenda, including through a champions' network. This has contributed to elevating the significant role that women leaders and organizations play in peacekeeping effectiveness and sustaining peace. Additionally, the targeted prioritization of women's participation across peacekeeping functions has contributed to raising the profile of local women leaders and networks in peacekeeping contexts.

Moreover, the 2019 Secretary-General's report (S/2019/800)[18] paved a road map by prioritizing actions directed to the UN System and other partners to galvanize the implementation of WPS commitments in-line with the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 (2000). The report served as an

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14 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN Department of Field Support (2018), *Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.*

15 See United Nations, *Promoting women, peace and security:* https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/promoting-women-peace-and-security.

16 See United Nations, *UN Secretary General's initiative on Action for Peacekeeping:* https://www.un.org/en/A4P/.

17 United Nations, Secretary General's initiative on Action for Peacekeeping: *Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations.*

18 UN Security Council (2019), *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security,* S/2019/800.

impetus for DPO's further push to leverage and build partnerships with local women's networks, organizations and leaders as central to conflict prevention and resolution and in achieving peace and political solutions. Specifically, the 2019 report required actors to focus on six key areas; strengthening leadership and accountability, ensuring political prioritization of women's participation, investing in protection of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, increasing the number and influence of women in peacekeeping missions and national security forces, and targeted financing and support to women networks.

More recently, the 2020 Secretary- General's (S/2020/946) report[19] further reiterates the urgent need to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda in full and boldly makes five decade-long recommendations post the 20th anniversary of 1325 (2000). Similarly, the Secretary-General's Data Strategy (2020-2022)[20] provides a significant impetus in centralizing data driven approaches to close the gender data gaps and the digital divide, further reinforcing DPO's initiatives aimed at strengthening WPS performance and accountability through data and analysis.

The disruptive force of COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating existing gender inequalities, which in turn undermines the gains made by women in sustainable peace and development. This is particularly the case for women in conflict and fragile settings where political solutions remain fragile. Resources that women and girls count on are being diverted, and their participation, leadership and advocacy increasingly limited. COVID-19 has led to a surge of violence against women and girls creating a pandemic within a pandemic.

Despite these COVID-19 related threats, women remain in frontline roles and innovatively have transformed these spaces to continue their active conflict resolution and peacebuilding roles and mitigate the political and socio-economic risks associated with the COVID impacts. In many peacekeeping contexts, women leaders have mobilized to advance the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire[21]. In the Central African Republic for example, women leaders and peacebuilders issued a declaration calling on the signatories of the Political Agreement to support the call for a ceasefire and make it a reality by the end of the year. Further afield, the peace operations continue to leverage their partnerships with national authorities and women's organizations, leaders and networks using mission assets, virtual and digital platforms to address misinformation, raise awareness, mitigate political threats and violence against women and keep the momentum on women's participation in the ongoing peace and political processes.

19 UN Security Council (2020), *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security,* S/2020/946 (advance copy).

20 United Nations (2020), *Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity 2020-2022*.

21 See United Nations (March 23, 2020), S*ecretary-General's Appeal for Global Ceasefire*; see also UN Women, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (2020), *Covid-19 and conflict: advancing women's meaningful participation in ceasefires and peace processes*, Policy brief n°19.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH ANALYSIS, DATA AND PARTNERSHIPS

Mission mandates

Over the last five years, high level joint advocacy by the Security Council, Member States, regional organizations and UN leadership, including through Security Council missions to different peacekeeping contexts and UN/EU/AU high level joint missions, and data driven joint analysis has contributed to the strengthening of mission WPS mandates. For example, MINUSMA[22] and MINUSCA[23] mandates include WPS as priority tasks, more nuanced and focused language on the tasks, while still maintaining the overarching integration of gender equality and WPS throughout the implementation of the mandates. This multi-pronged approach has significantly raised the profile and importance of WPS in implementing the mission mandates. In the same period, and for the first time in history, the UNIFIL[24] mandate included WPS language and tasks, while UNFICYP[25] and UNISFA[26] mandates acknowledged the work of the missions with local level community driven women led efforts in peace and reconciliation.

Notably too, the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on WPS has been instrumental through providing a strategic analytical space for the Security Council and member states. Importantly, sequencing these analytical discussions and documented outcomes with the strategic planning calendars, high level missions and mandate renewals has been beneficial.

Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix meeting with women leaders in Mali, January, 2020. UN/MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko

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22   United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

23   United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

24   United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon.

25   United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei.

26   United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

WPS MANDATED TASKS IN MISSION MANDATES

- UNIFIL's mandate UNSCR 2539 (2020)[27] includes a standalone operative paragraph 26, that requests UNIFIL to *"fully into account gender considerations as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate and to assist the Lebanese authorities in ensuring the full, effective and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels of decision-making in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as to support the implementation of the action plan on Women and Peace and Security, including to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence, further requests enhanced reporting by UNIFIL to the Security Council on this issue"*.

- MINUSMA's* mandate, UNSCR 2531 (2020)[28] and UNSCR 2480 (2019)[29], have been reinforced in regards to WPS and includes prioritized WPS tasks regarding women's participation in the implementation and monitoring mechanism of the Peace Agreement. UNSCR 2531 (2020) includes women's participation as a key benchmark and urges the Malian parties to *"implement the recommendations of the high-level workshop on participation of women in the mechanisms established by the Agreement to support and monitor its implementation, by increasing the representation of women in the Comité de suivi de l'Accord (CSA) and the sub-committees, setting-up a steering committee of the workshop's recommendations, as well as an observatory led by women with a clear mandate and mechanism to oversee progress towards women's full, effective and meaningful participation;"* (O.P 3). Moreover, it calls upon all parties in Mali to ensure full, effective and meaningful participation of women in the mechanisms established by the Agreement to support and monitor its implementation, using the appropriate framework, including through greater representation of women in the CSA, meeting the 30 per cent quota for women in all political functions and offices as defined in Mali's legislation, and completion of Agreement-related targets laid out in Mali's third national plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and requests the Secretary-General to pay specific attention to these points in its regular reporting on MINUSMA;

- UNMISS' [30] mandate UNSCR 2514 (2020)[31] included new and specific language on women's participation in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, this is a more nuanced WPS language as the previous mandates were more focused on protection of civilians, *"Welcomes the commitment to the inclusion of women in the Revitalised Agreement, including the 35% minimum for women's representation, and calls on all parties to do more to ensure that these minimum commitments are achieved and to ensure the full, effective, and meaningful participation and involvement of women in all spheres and levels of political leadership, the peace process, and the transitional government, and requests UNMISS to assist in these efforts; (O.P 31)"*.

27 UN Security Council (August 28, 2020), *Resolution 2539: The situation in the Middle East. Letter from the President of the Council on the voting outcome (S/2020/853) and voting details (S/2020/857)*, S/RES/2539 (2020).

28 Security Council (June 29, 2020), *Resolution 2531: The situation in Mali. Letter from the President of the Council on the voting outcome (S/2020/613) and voting details (S/2020/625)*, S/RES/2531 (2020).

29 UN Security Council (June 28, 2019), *Resolution 2480: The situation in Mali,* S/RES/2480 (2019).

30 United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

31 UN Security Council (March 12, 2020), *Resolution 2514: Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan,* S/RES/2514 (2020).

Internal accountability and evidence generation

To strengthen accountability, analysis and data driven data evidence generation, DPO rolled out a set of WPS accountability measures and tools in 2018; these are 15 core indicators[32], a dashboard, and qualitative quarterly reporting templates. Further, through collaboration between strategic communications sections and Gender Units in headquarters and at the field level, DPO has invested in data driven story-telling[33] to enhance the voices and priorities of women leaders as a key data sets to inform decision making. The WPS measures and tools have since been adopted across nine field missions. These tools track and monitor women's participation in peace and political processes, women's protection, gender responsive conflict prevention, and gender responsive peacekeeping and management commitments. Additionally, social and digital media products and the direct participation of women leaders in key strategic spaces and the amplification of their voices through strategic communications is concurrent to the quantitative data collection. Alignment, inclusion and interoperability of these WPS measures with the overall departmental performance frameworks, such as the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System and A4P is currently at the nascent level.

To further strengthen gender analysis in UN wide integrated planning priorities, within the framework of the Joint DPPA-DPO-UNDP-DOCO transitions project, DPO in partnership with UN Women, provided gender specific requirements for the implementation of the Secretary-General's Planning Directive on UN transitions[34]. DPO also invested in context specific gendered conflict analysis, and in collaboration with regional organizations (EU and AU), UN Women and other UN entities, undertook joint analysis in several contexts in 2018/9 for example in Central African Republic, Haiti, Darfur and in Liberia 2018.

The resultant data-driven analysis and evidence generation has contributed to stronger internal accountability, coherence, coordination and ownership; informed DPO's senior management decision making at field and headquarter levels, and informed analysis to the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on WPS and Security Council reports.

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32   UN Department of Peace Operations (2020), *Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security,* Resource Package.

33   UN Department of Peace Operations - Gender Unit (February 2020), *Leaders and changemakers women shaping peace, Women, peace and security highlights of UN peacekeeping in 2019.*

34   See United Nations Secretary-General (July 18, 2019), *Role of United Nations in Transition Processes Must Be Comprehensive, Coherent, Integrated, Secretary-General Stresses during Briefing to Security Council,* Statements and Messages; UN General Assembly, UN Security Council (May 30, 2019), *Peacebuilding and sustaining peace,* Report of the Secretary-General (A/73/890−S/2019/448).

WOMEN LEAD POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

DELEGATES IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

10% WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

in the February 2019 peace talks. The previous 2018 peace talks included no women

SOUTH SUDAN

28% WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

in local peace negotiations as of July 2019

CYPRUS

30% WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

in the peace negotiations that concluded in 2017

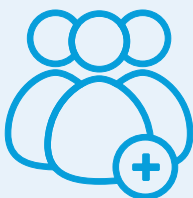## SIGNATORIES TO PEACE AGREEMENTS

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

ONE-WOMAN EX-COMBATANT

signed the February 2019 Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation

SOUTH SUDAN

25% WOMEN SIGNATORIES

to the October 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement

MEMBERS OF FORMAL PEACE COMMITTEES

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In October 2019, **17% OF MEMBERS** of formal monitoring committees at the **NATIONAL LEVEL** were women

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In October 2019, **23% OF MEMBERS** of formal monitoring committees at the **LOCAL LEVEL** were women

MALI

In 2019, **20% OF THE MEMBERS** of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were women.
No women participate in the formal Agreement Monitoring Committee

SOUTH SUDAN

In October 2019, **18% OF MEMBERS** of formal monitoring committees at the national level were women, **DESPITE QUOTA REQUIRING 35%** representation of women.
2 out of 10 formal monitoring committees at the national level are chaired by women

WOMEN IN LEADING GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

DELEGATES IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

SUDAN

In 2019, **22% OF MINISTERIAL POSITIONS** were held by women, including **THE FIRST EVER WOMAN FOREIGN MINISTER**

18% OF THE MEMBERS of the Sovereign Council were women

SUDAN

THE FIRST EVER WOMAN CHIEF JUSTICE was appointed in 2019

KOSOVO

Ministerial posts held by women increased from **5% TO 14%** (2017 – 2019)

WOMEN PLAY ACTIVE ROLES IN CONFLICT PREVENTION

WOMEN PREVENTING CONFLICT

SUDAN

46 WOMEN'S PROTECTION NETWORKS established in Darfur as early warning mechanisms that inform UNAMID's mission patrol planning and help prevent Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2014 – 2019)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

In October 2019, **46% OF THE EARLY WARNING MECHANISMS** supported by MINUSCA comprised **AT LEAST 30% WOMEN**

* Data from DPO WPS Annual Report, Leaders and Changemakers, Women Shaping Peace.

WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

As aligned to the A4P initiative, DPO has embraced and prioritized women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes as a political imperative to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace outcomes. DPO's approach is to support, enable, facilitate, expand the space, and leverage on local women-led peace and conflict resolution initiatives-to-engage in high level political advocacy through the good offices and senior leadership to promote women's participation in local and national peace negotiations, national dialogues, peace implementation mechanisms, local and national elections including in traditional community structures, post conflict governance institutions and security institutions.

The lessons learnt are now pivotal in galvanizing efforts across peace operations to build further momentum and transform peace and security. These lessons include for example, while engaging in high-level advocacy as an effective tool to open up the space for women leaders and women's networks to engage in formal peace and political process meaningfully, there must also be an equal full thrust in building strong partnerships with local women leaders and organizations as well as an investment in purposeful strategic communications to advance women's leadership and increase visibility of their roles, voices, priorities and contributions.

> " Any process or anything that needs to happen and work needs the opinion, the responsibilities, the needs of everyone that is involved in it.
>
> MAGDA ZENON
> HANDS ACROSS THE DIVIDE, CYPRUS

@UNPEACEKEEPING

The voices of women leaders have been put at the centre of DPO's strategic communications efforts on WPS

Guetel Moiba Esther Adrienne, President of the Central African Women's Organization, former combatant signing the CAR Peace Agreement in February 2019. UN/MINUSCA/Hervé Serefio

WOMEN NEGOTIATING PEACE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC'S PEACE PROCESS

For the first time in the country's history, women participated actively in the peace negotiations in the Central African Republic in 2019. One of them, representing an armed group went on to sign the *"Accord politique pour la paix et la réconciliation en République centrafricaine"* (APPR-RCA), which was signed on February 6, 2019 by 14 armed groups. In total, women made up 10 per cent of the participants in the peace talks, three women delegates from the Government, three observers and one woman from an armed group. They actively and successfully advocated for a gender inclusive peace agreement, which sets the APPR-RCA agreement apart from the previous ones.

High level political advocacy by international partners, including the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the European Union was significant in ensuring women were meaningfully participating. Moreover, the active engagement of local women networks continue to be significant enablers for the effective participation of women in the implementation mechanisms of the Agreement.

Furthermore, following extensive advocacy by women leaders, the 2019 electoral code now requires political parties to include at least 35 per cent women candidates on their electoral lists (art. 281). Its application will ensure durable and strengthened participation of women leaders in peace and political processes through elections.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION

Systematic and strategic engagement with women leaders, networks and organizations is pivotal to gender responsive early warning mechanisms, identifying protection threats and risks, de-escalating conflicts and brokering local peace deals. Leveraging therefore, on women's leadership, knowledge and expertise to sustain peace at community and national levels is pivotal to peacekeeping performance. Across the peacekeeping missions, dedicated efforts to support and partner with these women networks and mission supported women-led community committees are significant. These women led networks, remained unshaken even in the face of COVID-19 and the increased fragility, as effective and efficient early warning and protection focused structures. Normalizing engagement with women networks, has also proven effective in strengthening trust and confidence building with communities, which contributes to improving responses from peacekeepers to prevent conflicts, address insecurity and thereby contributing to a protective environment.

UN/UNAMID/Mohamad Almahady

DARFUR WOMEN PROTECTION NETWORKS

In Sudan, UNAMID has supported the establishment of 54 Women Protection Networks (WPNs) that function as early warning mechanisms. These networks have enhanced mapping of security and protection risks for women and girls, which has contributed to targeted gender responsive surveillance and police patrols. Women leaders share early warning signs with the Mission and local security forces for preventive action. They coordinate with UNAMID Military escorts in mapping the hot spots and escort / patrol schedules. This has directly improved their safety and security and allowed the Mission to respond quickly to threats to women in the IDP camps. The networks support and connect community members facing protection challenges with access to justice service providers, including civil society human rights.

GENDER RESPONSIVE DDR AND SSR

DPO has increased its efforts to promote gender- responsive security sector institutions and arrangements through developing policy and guidance, undertaking substantive gender analysis and strengthening women's leadership and influence in security related decision-making processes. Despite the progress, DPO and its peacekeeping operations currently operate in increasingly complex environments marked by limited resources, stalled and fragile peace processes as well as the emergence of new types of armed groups and politicized security forces. On the other hand, the UN Security Council has over time increasingly mandated peace operations to support national efforts on gender responsive DDR and SSR, as a central component to sustaining peace and sustainable development.

On DDR, DPO continues to enhance the participation of women ex-combatants and directly targeting women peacebuilders through DDR and Community Violence Reduction (CVR) initiatives, as crucial enablers for the success and sustainability of peace and security. Over the last few years, gender specific guidance on DDR has been adopted. For example, the 2006 Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS)[35], which is being updated, provides a dedicated module on gender[36] and takes into account the developments on WPS in the past decade and the 2012 Guide to Gender-responsive

DDR[37], released by the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR.

On SSR, the Inter-Agency SSR Task Force (IASSRTF)[38], co-chaired by DPO and the UN Development Programme, developed in 2012 a UN Integrated Guidance Note on Gender Responsive SSR[39]. In 2014 the UN approach to SSR was harmonized with Security Council resolution 2151 (2014)[40] which includes a commitment to gender integration consistent with the WPS agenda. Member States have also advanced the policy discussions in this area as reflected in the report of High-Level Roundtable on Gender Parity and SSR (2019).

In 2019, DPO developed joint recommendations between the DDR, SSR and Gender Units to strengthen gender responsive DDR and SSR in peace operations. The consultative process was significantly informed by the voices, experiences and contributions of women ex-combatants from Mali, CAR and Colombia. Moreover, these joint recommendations aimed to advance the A4P WPS priorities and in response to the 2019 Secretary-General's report on WPS, where stronger gender integration in the security sector was reiterated as well as the need to strengthen efforts to increase the number of women in national security services. This framework entails shifting the perception of women as solely victims of armed conflict or subject of protection by the security forces, to recognizing them as decision makers, security officers, and change makers in the SSR and DDR.

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35 Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (2006), *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*.

36 Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (2006), *"Integrated DDR Standards, Chapter 5.10 – Women, Gender and DDR"*.

37 Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (2012), *How-to guide gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration*.

38 The IASSRTF continues to coordinate guidance development, including by supporting the UN Women, the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to review the forthcoming 2019 Gender and Security Toolkit for security sector practitioners; see United Nations, Security sector reform: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/security-sector-reform; see also UN SSR Task Force (2012), *Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes — Gender-Responsive Security Sector Reform*.

39 United Nations (2012), *Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes — Gender-Responsive Security Sector Reform*.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE DDR AND SSR MANDATED TASKS IN MISSION MANDATES

UNSC Res 2531/2020 on MINUSMA,"in support to the implementation of the defence and security measures of the Agreement within the framework of an inclusive and consensual reform of the security sector, urged the Malian authorities to take into account the particular needs of women and children, and persons belonging to marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, and without prejudice to the anticipated plans of the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration and integration commissions…".

(O.P 54) of UNSC Res 2531, mandated MINUSMA "to assist the Malian authorities in ensuring the full, effective and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels in the implementation of the Agreement, including the security sector reform". Against this backdrop,

and amidst the ongoing political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, MINUSMA[41] has scaled up its efforts to include women in the SSR committees of the peace agreement and build the capacities of security institutions to respond to all forms of violence against women, youth and girls. The mission has also supported the establishment of a vetting mechanism that will prevent perpetrators of sexual violence from joining the Malian Army.

MINUSCA's UNSC Res 2448 (2018)[42] Par 16 "urges the CAR Authorities to address the presence and activity of armed groups in the CAR by implementing a comprehensive strategy that prioritizes dialogue and the urgent implementation of an inclusive, gender-sensitive and effective DDR as well as repatriation (DDRR) in the case of foreign fighters, including children formerly

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40 UN Security Council (2014), *Resolution 2151: The maintenance of international peace and security: Security sector reform: challenges and opportunities,* S/RES/2151 (2014).

41 Security Council mandated MINUSMA "to assist the Malian authorities in ensuring the full, effective and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels in the implementation of the Agreement, including the security sector reform".

42 UN Security Council (December 13, 2018), *Resolution 2448: The situation in the Central African Republic,* S/RES/2448(2018).

II. Structural challenges in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda

20 years after the adoption of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, the effective implementation of the WPS agenda is a far cry from reality. While there is evidence of progress, it is uneven, slow and fragile. Women continue to be under-represented in peace and political processes and are largely excluded from governance and other decision-making spaces in peace and security. Their contributions and key roles in local networks, early warning mechanisms, conflict prevention and in building bridges between communities are largely ignored or perceived as just informal. The Secretary-General, in his 2020 WPS report acknowledges that more needs to be done and more boldly, *"Moving forward, more attention is needed to the intersecting discrimination many women face based on race, ethnicity, ability, economic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and the removal of structural barriers to increase participation of diverse women in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace"* [44].

The lack of political will, prioritization, accountability and the global push back on the full implementation of gender equality and WPS commitments is a huge structural stumbling block to the implementation of the full WPS agenda. Evidentially, there is a striking disparity between the wide knowledge, awareness and reference to one of the strongest gender equality frameworks and its implementation and achievement. Despite being one of the most member state endorsed frameworks, there is a growing lack of consensus amongst member states and other key actors in the international community on firmly pivoting WPS at the centre of conflict prevention, resolution and international peace and security (SG 2019 report)[45]. Moreover, limited resources and a lack of investment in technical specialists, specialized gender equality and WPS functions and entities, women's organizations and national gender machineries are a sure sign of the lack of political commitment at all levels. This is in sharp contrast to the growth in military expenditure globally.

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43 UN Security Council (2020), *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security,* S/2020/946, Paragraph 10 (advance copy).

44 UN Security Council (2019), *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security,* S/2019/800.

Furthermore, the perpetual lack of accountability and impunity reinforces and perpetuates violence against women and specific forms of violence targeted at women peacebuilders, rights defenders and those in politics. These challenges have deepened the lack of implementation of the WPS agenda writ large, and more significantly the realization of the *raison d'être* of the women, peace and security agenda, women's full and meaningful participation and their protection.

Structural gender norms, power dynamics, patriarchal structures and value systems pose a significant barrier to the successful implementation of WPS commitments. In multiple instances, WPS initiatives have been framed primarily from a protection lens, where women are only seen as vulnerable, passive and thus needing or requiring protection services. On the other hand, the security sector and related institutions, systems and structures are male dominated, and women's roles and participation not perceived as a norm in this sector. Despite collective advocacy and evidence of leadership in conflict resolution, peace and security; there has been a challenge in shifting and advancing the momentum of women's participation, as evidenced by the slow progress in embracing women as leaders, decision makers and peace agents across political, peace and security decision making.

Evidence continues to show that, the implementation of the agenda in its spirit and letter, will only advance when there is full recognition of women leaders, networks and organizations as a political constituency and embrace bold and transformative actions to change this narrative.

While there is a breadth of knowledge, evidence, experiences and expertise to drive analysis on WPS, including a knowledge base resting with the women's networks and leaders; policy makers and practioners have not systematically embraced data driven systems and mechanisms to enable accountable decision making nor put in place mechanisms to address the existing data gender gaps and the digital divide. There is tendency also to minimize the progress, influence and impact of implementing the WPS agenda to numbers of women, as the traditional and conventional "academic" approach to measuring progress or lack thereof. These approaches exclude the rich experiences and deep knowledge from the women's organization and networks, and this is further compounded by the gendered digital divide and data gaps. With COVID-19, these divides are further deepening, as women get consistently excluded from the digital and virtual spaces, where the decision-making spaces have shifted.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

The year 2020 is a critical juncture to refocus, recalibrate and reinvigorate the implementation of the WPS agenda through collective and strategic actions that change the narrative and pace of implementation. The 20th anniversary and the related political advocacy, stock taking, and the deep reflections across actors globally has presented a momentum to re-evaluate the implementation of the WPS agenda. The COVID-19 realities and the emergent risks and threats that could lead to the reversal of the modest gains, also provides an impetus to collectively redouble the efforts for successful realization of the WPS agenda. Specifically, through the following actions.

Centralize and embrace a transformative shift in women's participation to achieve peace and political outcomes is critical. International peace and security can only be transformed through a concerted effort to centralize the leadership and contributions of women at all decision-making levels. Strategic partnerships with local women leaders and networks has proven to be critical as political processes are owned and anchored within community processes. While this recognition is important, peace and security actors must leverage and build on these successful women-led initiatives, in some instances perceived as informal, and identify innovative ways to break the structural barriers, strengthen and systemize them in decision making at all level, from local to national to regional. Specifically, actors must:

A. **PRIORITIZE AND INVEST IN COMMUNITY-BASED LOCAL WOMEN NETWORKS AND ORGANIZATIONS;** by empowering, creating synergies, resourcing, and investing in community-based local women networks and organizations as transformative partners and change makers.

B. **ACCELERATE AND LEVERAGE WOMEN'S MOBILIZATION TO TRANSFORM PEACE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES;** by recognizing the transformative vision of women's movements to challenge unequal power relations, harmful structural gender norms and value systems that perpetuate exclusion, we prioritize the inclusion of women rights defenders, women peacebuilders, women in security institutions, women ex-combatants, to assert their leadership in decision-making.

Accelerate the momentum through demonstrated political will and partnerships to translate the global normative frameworks into practice. All actors must demonstrate political will to actualize the implementation of the WPS agenda. Vibrant data driven accountability mechanisms and investment of dedicated financial and technical resources are critical to overcome the current significant barriers and challenges and collectively advance the implementation of WPS commitments and agenda. Women's participation must be more grounded as a political imperative in

decision making right from the Security Council to peace negotiations/processes to mission mandates to institutional operational frameworks. Specifically, actors must:

C. HARNESS DATA AND GENDER ANALYSIS FOR ACCOUNTABLE DECISION-MAKING: By closing the data gaps, bridging the digital divide and recognizing the value of women's experiences, knowledge, understanding and expertise, we improve investments and accountability in decision-making, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness in sustaining peace.

D. CREATE DYNAMIC AND INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION: By forging creative partnerships for cooperation between policymakers and practitioners, and demonstrating political will, making resources available for technical gender experts we leverage our different comparative advantages to centralize women's direct participation in peace and political processes.

Transform gender norms that limit women's participation in peace and security priorities through normalizing the leadership of diverse groups of women, including women ex-combatants, women peace builders and women's rights defenders. Increasingly these groups of women are under threat and therefore addressing protection barriers to their full and meaningful participation in decision making, violence against women and all forms of political violence targeted to women will contribute to an enabling environment where women's participation can be actualized. This approach also shifts the current approach from a purely protection and vulnerability lens to a political lens that acknowledges, recognizes and embraces women as change agents and peace actors.

E. SYSTEMIZE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TO INFLUENCE CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESOLUTION AND CREATE A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT that empowers women leaders, protects women human rights defenders and peacebuilders and recognizes their community-led conflict resolution efforts and mechanisms that reduce their heightened risks to sexual and gender-based violence and political violence.

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