

Geneva Consultations on Women, Peace, and Security Security Council Resolution 1325

Geneva, 15 -16 Sept. 2010

- Short summary -

An inspiring two-day High-Level Consultation marking the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security took place on 15/16 September at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Focused on the “protection” dimension of Resolution 1325, this was the second in a series of three events on the Resolution’s “three Ps”: participation (Brussels), protection (Geneva) and prevention (New York). The event in Geneva was organised jointly by the Belgian Mission and the EU delegation, in partnership with UNHCR, UNFPA, UNITAR and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The consultation was preceded by a panel discussion in the morning organised by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), which opened with a powerful introduction by Ms. Micheline Calmy Rey, Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

The panel discussion in the morning of the 15th by DCAF had a strong security focus: the panel discussed the need for gender sensitive Security Sector Reform (SSR), ways in which uniformed forces can adopt SCR 1325 in their operations, and the urgency for a dialogue between women and armed/uniformed forces. The morning session was closed with a statement by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The consultation organized by the Belgian and EU delegations, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNITAR and WILPF opened with an introduction by Madeleine Rees, the overall moderator, Belgian ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen and ambassador John Clarke from the EU delegation. It was followed by a first panel discussion, which included contributions from the EU, Human Rights Watch and the ECHO working group. The focus of the discussion was on what the EU can do (in concrete terms) to improve upon implementation of SCR 1325. Implementation, thus far, was deemed by all participants to be inadequate. The panelists stated their commitment to the promotion of the development of National Action Plans (as encouraged in the resolution). The possibility of an EU Gender Advisor was also discussed. The first day ended with a screening of the documentary “Pray the Devil back to Hell” on the involvement of women in the peace process in Liberia, and a question and answer session with producer Abigail Disney.

The consultation continued on the 16th with several other panel discussions. In a panel discussion on 'Displacement and Protection under SCR 1325', Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa at UNHCR, urged all humanitarian agencies to adopt non-negotiable programme priorities for the protection of women and girls, such as prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). He also called upon relevant actors to back up such commitments with adequate financial resources. Mr. Okoth-Obbo along with his fellow panelists –Elisabeth Rasmussen (Norwegian Refugee Council), Selay Ghaffar (Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan), Daniel De Torres (DCAF) and Panel Moderator Madeleine Rees (WILPF) – also reiterated the urgency to end impunity for violence against women by expanding Governments’ capacity and holding states accountable for the protection of their citizens. All panelists stressed the need to radically improve communication between security forces and women. To that effect, Ms. Rasmussen called for a redesign in the “architecture” of dialogue, so as to create a credible space for women to participate in

decision-making, both in camp and urban settings, as well as other contexts where women are on the move. Not only must all relevant actors listen to women, but they should also enact policies to ensure that women's concerns are followed-up on and commitments are translated into action.

The panel discussion on resolution 1325 and displacement was followed by a UNFPA-organised panel discussion on the impact of conflict on women. The panel (including representatives from CARE, DCAF, OHCHR and UNFPA) discussed protection gaps for women in post conflict environments, the need to support grass root organizations and the role of men and boys, and the construction of masculinities.

The third and last panel of the day, on post conflict recovery, focused on state and military accountability for implementation of SCR 1325, access to justice and the (dis)advantages of traditional justice vs. formal justice (in light of accessibility, woman-friendliness and satisfactory outcomes). The events were closed with a summary by Madeleine Rees and the presentation of the conclusions to the Belgian ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen.

The recommendations of this event, together with the ones elaborated during the two other High Level Consultations held in Brussels and New York, will inform the EU contribution to the UN Ministerial debate on resolution 1325 organized by the Security Council in New York in October 2010.

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