



## Ambassador Luncheon Report – 11 October 2010

In the context of the EU Joint Team and Belgium's current Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Belgian Permanent Representation to the United Nations in Geneva hosted a lunch for the ambassadors of the EU member states and a number of like-minded countries to discuss the follow-up to Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325) against the background of its 10th anniversary. Present as well were United Nations officials from UN Action, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and senior representatives from non-governmental organisations including Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

In opening the discussion, Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen, detailed the importance the Belgian Government places on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. As part of its EU Presidency, in the context of the EU Joint Team, the Belgian Government has organised, coordinated and participated in recent events on the topic of SCR1325. This has included the EU Conference, [Ensuring women's participation in peace and security](#) on 9 September 2010 in Brussels; [Women, Peace and Security: from Resolution to Action](#) on 15-16 September 2010 in Geneva; and the civil society Geneva event [10 Years after UN SCR 1325: Conflict Prevention Mechanisms](#) on 2 September 2010.

Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen discussed how the adoption of the four WPS resolutions ([SCR1325](#), [1820](#), [1888](#) and [1889](#)) might appear as progress. Though, the support shown in the four resolutions has regrettably not been translated into convincing action. The last ten years has seen women in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan and Nepal, and other countries around the world, struggle to keep families alive and strong in the face of conflict. They have advocated for their voice to be heard at decision-making tables on peace processes, national legislation and the formulation of government and public policies and programmes. Their continued exclusion is indicative of how much remains to be done if the international community is to secure real protection and real participation of women in accordance with the Security Council Resolutions.

Mr John Clarke, chargé d'affaires of the EU Delegation, discussed the relevance of the recommendations from the recent events and their importance, including for follow-up by the EU. These recommendations include the establishment of a UN Women counterpart within the EU and work to better balance EU engagement in hard security (military and peacekeeping) with investment in transformative, community prevention and post conflict strategies. He suggested for the EU and like-minded states to have a comprehensive and consistent approach in upcoming meetings such as the UN Security Council open debate on 29 October 2010.



Madeline Rees, Secretary General of WILPF, gave a key speech in which she examined the outcome of the two-day consultation on the protection elements of SCR1325. She identified the issues that were common and crucial in all the panel discussions;

- The need to broaden our understanding of Security.
- The nature of gender and its intersection with other discriminations.
- The need for the consistent application of Human Rights and the use of existing mechanisms so as to give effect to SCR1325.
- The three P's of WPS (participation, prevention and protection) are wholly interconnected and relevant in pre, during and post conflict scenarios.

Ambassadors and representatives were then addressed by keynote speaker Ms Erika Feller, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR. Ms Feller detailed the significance of SCR1325 for refugee and displaced women, who are at heightened risk of exposure to violence because they are not connected to the political agenda and lack documentation. Ms Feller reminded all that the resolution was the first to acknowledge the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the importance of women's equal participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The resolution explicitly mentions refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), calling for warring parties to respect the refugee convention and respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements.

Ms Feller presented a number of examples where women's engagement and participation improved their lives and those of their families, addressing some of the main risks they are exposed to. Key goals are ending impunity for gender-based crimes and mainstreaming gender equality. Basic protection tools can ensure livelihoods where these are lacking, and provide documentation. UNHCR addresses Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) as an organisational priority, and is implementing a system that cements accountability for protection of women at the highest organisational level.

Crucial importance has to be given to participation. Women have a role in reconstruction and their participation is fundamental for the sustainability of peace. Participation is the key to reduce their vulnerability. Refugee women and all refugees are agents for peace, not only victims of war. Ms Feller called for, inter alia, other organisations to review and re-centre programmes to improve protection for women and girls, with emphasis on adequate budgets and non-negotiable aspects of protection, such as prevention of and response to SGBV. She closed her remarks stressing the importance of listening to women, and announced the regional dialogues with women and girls that UNHCR is undertaking to give them voice and space in the celebrations of the refugee and statelessness conventions next year.

In the discussion following, several issues predominated: how to use human rights, the arms trade, the inclusion of women in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes and ensuring funding for community-level organisations. There was recognition of the need for Human Rights, as they relate to the WPS Agenda, to be reported on and monitored through the Human Rights mechanisms. The arms trade was identified as being a neglected area of discussion. The diversion of resources to arms undermines development and States were urged to pursue real and effective control of arms sales as a major contribution to avoiding conflict, particularly through their negotiations for the Arms Trade Treaty. Since 2000, the world's expenditure on arms has increased by 49 per cent. Just one year of the world's military expenditure would fund 2,928 years of UN Women. As an example of how to end gender stereotyping in DDR processes, there was a suggestion to look at the demobilised women in Nepal as potential peacekeepers in all women units, as requested by DPKO. On funding, there was general concern that there was both a shortage of funding plus an inability to deliver to grass roots organisations and that this contravened the very core of SCR 1325's demands for participation.

UNFPA discussed the launch of the 2010 State of the World Population Report due for release on 20 October 2010, which will have particular focus on elements relevant to SCR1325.

With 2011 marking the 60th Anniversary of the Refugee Convention UNHCR detailed upcoming research on the particular needs of women in displacement. As an event to mark the 60th anniversary, women involved in the research will be invited to Geneva to discuss their experiences. Participants were assured that they would be notified of this closer to the date.

The World YWCA General Secretary, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, intervened from the floor and welcomed the recommendations that the EU would commit to follow up.

Hungary thanked Belgium for their dedication and work and announced a follow up conference to be held in Brussels in March 2011 as part of the Hungarian EU Presidency. They discussed the importance of continuing the momentum of progress into the 11th year of SCR1325 and beyond.

For further information please see:

Representation of Belgium to the UN in Geneva

<http://diplomatie.be/genevaun/>

EU Trio – Belgian EU Presidency

<http://www.eutrio.be/high-level-consultation-women-peace-and-securityresolution-action-protection-agenda-under-security>

Council of the European Union – Women, Peace and Security

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1886&lang=en>

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

<http://www.wilpfinternational.org/humanrights/1325+10/1325+10%20homepage.html>

WILPF Peacewomen

<http://www.peacewomen.org/pages/anniversary/1325-and-subsequent-scrs>