

Consultation Paper - Ireland's Second National Action Plan

Women, Peace and Security

Submission - UN Women UN NI branch

UN Women UK / NI committee

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Our organizational context

1.1 Including the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325, UN Women's work on peace and security issues has been driven by the Millennium Goals. UN Women supports strategies and projects which focus on increasing women's participation in decision-making, promoting the use of gender perspectives in policy development, strengthening the protection of women affected by conflict, countering conflict-related sexual violence, amplifying calls for accountability and advancing the status of women in post-conflict settings.

1.2 UN Women works on several fronts towards ending violence against women and girls. This includes tackling its main root of gender inequality. Efforts are multiplied through advocacy campaigns and partnerships with governments, civil society and the UN system. Initiatives range from working to establish legal frameworks and specific national actions, to supporting prevention at the grassroots level, including in conflict and post-conflict situations.

1.3 Our focus reflects four key thematic areas: Peace Building, Security and Justice, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence and Post-Conflict and Humanitarian Planning. These are consistent with the direction of the National Action Plan on Women and the five Pillars' objectives identified by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

1.4 UN Women UK NI branch actively lobbies for implementation of UNSCRs 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010)

UNSCR 1325, adopted in 2000, recognises that women's and girl's experiences of armed conflict are different, that the impact of conflict is different because of their gender and status in society, and that their security concerns differ as do their responses to conflict, peace building and reconstruction. Importantly, it recognises that women and girls have a critical role as active agents in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction.

2 Our response to the consultation follows :

Q1 - What strategic objectives should be priorities for the second National Action Plan?

2.1 The NAP is innovative and reflects national and international dimensions relating to prevention of Conflict including gender based violence and sexual exploitation.

2.2 We welcome the Ireland-Northern Ireland dimensions and acknowledgement of those women who have migrated to Ireland from a conflict setting. In N Ireland we have history of conflict which provides a platform for empathy and dissemination of lessons learnt. Pillars 3,2 and 5 for Ireland-Northern Ireland specifically are of relevance for continued inclusion.

2.3 Migrant women affected by conflict carry the trauma with them to Ireland – Northern Ireland where they face multiple issues, including fear, emotional and physical trauma and anxiety of state bodies who control their destiny.

We support strengthening in NAP of the international thrust to tackle violence against women in conflict zones.

2.4 **We recommend** enhanced cross border structures and strategies to address an Ireland - Northern Ireland - UK action plan to meet gaps **for supporting**

migrant women. The Department of Justice and UK Borders Agency policy to support women arriving in Ireland – N Ireland arriving from other countries where they experienced conflict and violence is weak . **We recommend** the NAP should ensure the Anglo- Irish Division review and extend the range of actions on Ireland- Northern Ireland so that these are represented in and enhanced across all Pillars of the NAP. In particular actions should be strengthened on women's empowerment and participation at all levels; engagement with Northern Ireland authorities, cross- border bodies, the British Government and East- West fora. The areas of gender- based violence and dealing with the legacy of the past should be included.

2.5 NAP has demonstrated influence, advocacy and international lobbying for women, peace and security. A number of military advisers from the Defence Forces have been strategically positioned to support UNSCR 1325. **We recommend** this is strengthened and continues.

2) How can Ireland help empower women affected by conflict ?

3.0 A strategic pathway of services for those affected by personal violence in Ireland – Northern Ireland by and those effected by violence resulting from international conflict should be produced. Mapping services is an instrument highlighting cross department agency and jurisdictional responsibilities, services, collaborative outcomes subsequently monitored for achievement.

UN Women supports data collection on violence against women, facilitating new learning on the issue. **We recommend** gathering such information on trends post the Good Friday Agreement.

Q 3. How can the second National Action Plan reflect the commitments in

Ireland's Policy for International Development, *One World, One Future*, and other relevant government policies and strategies?

4.0 Ireland supports the mainstreaming of 1325 within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). and has a long tradition of participation in peacekeeping operations overseas deployment of services and standards. One of the NAP's major strengths is in promoting mainstreaming of preventing gender- based violence. GBV actions and indicators are well populated in the NAP Pillar 5. It is a dimension that demonstrates a strategic approach to enhancing Ireland's leverage within international, regional and national arenas which champion of women's equality and human rights. **We recommend this model of operation continues and is strengthened.**

4.1 **We recommend** the Human Rights Unit, should identify and implement steps that can be taken to advance UNSCR 1325 , women's human rights and maintain advocacy efforts at the UN to align UNSCR 1325 with the post 2015 development agenda.

4.2 **We recommend** greater focus across all Pillars on supporting women's empowerment and participation as agents of change, supporting women's participation and representation in institutions and in mediation of conflict and peace processes.

4.3 A more comprehensive Pillar 4 on relief, recovery and rehabilitation, broadened to reflect humanitarian, development and rehabilitation activities is **recommended**

Q 4. How should the National Action Plan approach actions relating to Ireland-Northern Ireland?

5.0 Defining 'armed conflict' in N Ireland remains a challenge for an Ireland – Northern Ireland strategic response. The British government is resistant to implementing UNSCR 1325, as it does not agree that the conflict in Northern Ireland meets the definition of 'armed conflict'. As a consequence NI has not been included in the UK National Action Plan. We welcome the continuity of the NAP Ireland continuing an Ireland – Northern Ireland direction in relation to this matter. We believe the full implementation on UNSCR 1325 is crucial. This matter has been raised with the NI Assembly 's All Party Group on UNSCR and so far shows little progress as does its' Gender equality Strategy. Equally the Westminster group has dropped an inquiry into the implementation of the resolution due to lack funds. As stated by the UK Head of Delegation, in December 2013, the UK position is NI does not constitute an armed conflict as defined under international law.

5.1 Before it was dropped due to lack of funds, the Westminster group collected written and oral evidence for their inquiry. It found that the views of women on gender issues was pessimistic as reported from local communities, representatives from expert NGOs and representatives of statutory bodies working on gender issues.

5.2 In 2009 the UK reported to the UN, within N Ireland UNSCR 1325 is widely acknowledged as an important international commitment to women's equality and empowerment, but we see little action supporting this statement. We believe ignoring the issue does not equate to suggesting post conflict violence issues and discrimination have been eliminated.

5.3 There has been an increase in reported incidences of domestic and sexual violence in Northern Ireland since the signing of the Good Friday/Belfast agreement. However there is a dearth of research to examine the relationship between post conflict impact and effect upon the increase of violence against

women and girls There is also little understanding of conflict-related trauma and the specific impact of this on women. This is an oversight in the peace building process and is one reflection of the neglect of gender issues on the part of government in Northern Ireland.

5.4 Domestic violence perpetrated by paramilitaries or those with paramilitary connections against their partners or families was not adequately dealt with during the conflict. This was due in part to the power wielded by paramilitaries in certain communities where there was suspicion of and hostility to the police. Paramilitaries were also being protected by their organisations, and women feared reporting to the police. Expert organisations, including Women's Aid have reported that women are being pressured by their community not to report domestic violence to the police for this reason.

5.5 **We recommend** that the NAP includes research into the above area and establish cross border mechanisms to research the legacy of the conflict upon violence against women in N Ireland.

5.6 Within the context of a paucity of women's representation in government and positions of leadership, earlier this year on a mission to the UK, Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, called for the development of strategies and action plans in Northern Ireland "to ensure the increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making and in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict". Government has yet to respond.

There is a lack of women in electoral politics and the low numbers of women appointed to public bodies.

5.7 A current consultation from the NI Assembly 'Stakeholder Call for Evidence on Review Women in Politics and the NI Assembly', states 4 out of 15 Ministers in the Assembly are women and 23.5 % of women are Local Councilors. **We**

support the National Action Plan continuing action on Pillar 2 ‘ Participation and Representation of Women in Decision making’ as a strengthening measure to empower women to influence the local agenda in their communities .

5.8 The recent Westminster inquiry, December 2013, met with a Panel of experts on women, conflict and decision making. It heard from women that paramilitaries continue to monitor their compliance with the political agenda of the peace process and actively discourage their voices of speaking out. Enhanced representation of women in public political spaces will mitigate against this undercurrent of threat.

5.9 **We recommend** the NAP addresses Ireland – Northern Ireland barriers to women’s participation in political processes and assesses the potential of positive actions to address this and mechanisms to increase their voices being heard.

5. How can the existing monitoring mechanisms of the first National Action Plan be improved? How can the Oireachtas play a greater role?

6.1 Much has been achieved, however greater emphasis on a strategic joined up multi agency and cross border implementation plan will add considerably to improved outcomes.

There is an opportunity to develop the Ireland-Northern Ireland dimensions across the Pillars, which can be done while taking account of jurisdictional constraints and without detracting from the international focus.

6. How should Ireland promote Women, Peace and Security in multilateral organisations?

7.0 Uniquely, Ireland’s NAP has inward and outward looking dimensions. Pillar 2

contains a number of actions on increasing women's representation in institutions. Internationally little effort has gone into mediation of conflict and peace processes. Ireland has access to women with experience and expertise gained in the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Progress to implement 1325 is partly dependent on the commitment and capacity of partners to design women's empowerment plans as stand-alone projects and as a dimension in other projects for which they have delivery responsibility.

7.1 The NAP mid way review shows the Department of Justice and Equality has funded organisations to increase awareness of violence among vulnerable groups in Ireland, but actions specifically promoting awareness and provision of support services to women and girls from conflict-affected areas who are recovering from domestic, sexual or gender-based violence do not appear to have progressed.

7.2 There are no participative actions for migrant women and no GBV actions for Northern Ireland women. Pillar 1 and Pillar 3 equally apply internationally and internally to migrant women affected by conflict in Ireland - Northern Ireland. **Pillar 4 on 'Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation' could take account of women in Northern Ireland as victims and survivors and in dealing with the legacy of the past as well as auctioning international commitments.**

7.3 In addition, there should be opportunities to discuss and reflect on how women's experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland might relate to operational contexts elsewhere. Such reflection could help to build CSO capacity in preparing more effective 1325 internationally