
Statement at the Security Council Arria Formula Meeting on the Role of Women in Peace Consolidation

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In Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the Council expressed “its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women’s groups.” The Security Council’s mission to Sudan (5-9 June 2006) provided an important opportunity for the knowledge, expertise and resources of women’s civil society organizations to inform and support the Security Council in its work and decision making on Sudan.

We, the undersigned women’s civil society organizations, have outlined three critical issues which require the Security Council’s attention.

1. Review and Amendment of Voluntary Work Act

Women’s organizations remain prepared to engage in constructive work on peace and security issues, such as this dialogue with the Security Council delegation. However, with the Voluntary Work Act of 2006, the very existence of women’s civil society organizations is in jeopardy. Women’s civil society organizations must work even harder than before to comply with new review and approval processes mandated by the Act.

We, the undersigned women’s civil society organizations, request the Security Council to urge the Government of National Unity to review and amend the Voluntary Work Act, and to encourage the Government to facilitate the access of women’s organizations so they can provide necessary humanitarian services.

2. Addressing Protection & Humanitarian Needs

During the conflict in Darfur, sexual violence and rape was reported to be systematic and a strategy of war. Today, with increased militarization of the IDP camps there is also an increase in domestic violence and other forms of violence against women within IDP communities.

Violence against women, however, does not only occur in Darfur - where there is a great deal of information and programming for prevention and response. Violence against women also occurs in regions such as the Nuba Mountains, in Eastern Sudan, in areas of South Sudan where the LRA and other militias are present, and in IDP camps in Khartoum. Violence against women is as much a reflection of women’s status in society and low levels of awareness of gender-based violence, as it is a reflection of weak enforcement of rule of law and prevailing impunity.

As a result of sexual violence, women require specialized healthcare and facilitated access to legal redress, and the children born of this violence are increasingly abandoned by their families and communities.

We, the undersigned women’s civil society organizations, encourage the Security Council to urge the government to put in place mechanisms to combat violence against women in all its forms, support awareness raising, and provide psycho-social support, and healthcare. In addition, it is critical that the

government create an enabling environment to report, investigate, and prosecute cases of violence against women, with an eye to ending impunity.

3. Facilitating Voluntary Return

It is critical that women are supported during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. During conflict and displacement, women assume a disproportionate burden of care and play a decision-making role to ensure that their basic needs and the needs of their families and communities are met. This critical decision-making role that women play must be supported in times of peace.

In the Nuba Mountains, women's NGOs took the initiative within their community to support the voluntary return of IDPs living in Khartoum. The community raised funds and organized transportation for 4,000 families to South Kordofan; however, their efforts have been blocked.

It is imperative that the Security Council support efforts such as these - and in other IDP communities – where return to home communities is seen as a vital peace dividend, tangible and essential for both the well-being of families, as well as reconciliation and reconstruction of conflict-affected regions.

We, the undersigned women's civil society organizations, request the Security Council to urge the Government to facilitate the voluntary return of women and protect their rights during the return process. In order to ensure sustainable return, women's participation in decision-making roles is vital to successful vocational training and education, income-generation programmes and other services.

In conclusion, the signing of the CPA and DPA offer an opportunity for re-imagining Sudan. For women's organizations this must include a review of national laws and legal frameworks to harmonize them with international human rights instruments ratified by the government, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and their Optional Protocols.

Women must be active participants in the decision-making bodies established by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the newly-signed Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), including the upcoming Darfur Joint Assessment Mission, the CPA and DPA commissions. Likewise, women's knowledge and expertise should be reflected through their active participation in the Darfur Dialogue and Consultation process and current Asmara Talks regarding Eastern Sudan.

Women of Sudan unite from North to South, East to West, and commit themselves to fostering peace and security with support from the international community.

Signed NGO Members

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