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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

In October 2000, the UN Security Council endorsed the ground-breaking Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. UNSCR 1325 responded to a raft of serious lessons learned from the previous decade and more of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Experience showed that the nature of warfare was changing, with civilians increasingly targeted and women, in particular, often bearing the brunt of conflict. Women suffered a range of harms, from sexual and gender-based violence inflicted by combatants, to the loss of their spouse and families, to the loss of their livelihoods and personal autonomy. Furthermore, even during transitional and peacebuilding periods, it became clear that women continued to be marginalised, with domestic and international stakeholders consistently overlooking their contributions and/or excluding their voices from critical peace processes. Notably, this early analysis focused primarily on sex-based violence, but there is a growing understanding that sexual minorities and non-binary gender identities also face distinct vulnerabilities during conflict which should be reflected in a broader framing of the WPS agenda.

UNSCR 1325 called on countries to explicitly address the specific impacts that conflict had on women and girls around the globe and to more systematically include women in peacebuilding efforts, including peace talks, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Over the last two decades, UNSCR 1325 has been complemented by an additional eight resolutions on women’s peace and security (see Chapter 1 below for more detail). Together, these resolutions provide guidance to both national and international actors on their duties and roles in relation to women’s peace and security.

The women, peace and security agenda remains of critical importance in a globalised world that continues to grapple with complex manifestations of conflict, whether expressed through violent state-based warfare, civil war, internal domestic conflict or violent extremism. In response, many countries across the world have pushed to ensure a more systematic implementation of this crucial agenda. Most obviously, in nearly 80 countries, National Action Plans (NAPs) on women, peace and security have been developed, to prioritise actions for government bodies and other agencies. In other countries, gender-sensitive peace and security priorities have been captured in sectoral gender, justice or national security strategies. Notably however, experience has shown that the inclusion of parliaments in efforts to support the women, peace and security agenda has been variable, with many parliaments either unaware or uninvolved in national implementation efforts.¹

The Handbook

Recognising the value of the UNSCR 1325 agenda to ongoing efforts to ensure the protection and promotion of women’s rights and gender equality, this Handbook seeks to provide guidance to parliamentarians on their role in supporting this agenda. The objectives of this Handbook are threefold, namely to:

- Provide information to parliamentarians on the substance of the global women, peace and security agenda as it applies domestically;
- Provide guidance on how parliaments and parliamentarians can support implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. This guidance is intended to be useful not only to

¹ Only Europe has undertaken a systematic review of parliamentary engagement in supporting the WPS agenda, through the survey by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on WPS implementation, but in other regions, there is only sparse information available and a simple review of existing WPS NAPs shows only limited inclusion of the legislature: see Sarah Ferbach & Audrey Reeves (2018) The role of parliaments in NATO member countries in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda: A Survey by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2018), DCAF: Geneva, p.12-13.
Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, but also to development practitioners who work with parliaments, to help guide their programming, project activities, knowledge and advocacy products and country context analyses;

- Share examples of good practice from other parliaments and parliamentary project that could be considered for adaptation according to each specific domestic context.

It is important to recognise at the outset that this Handbook is aimed at all Members of Parliament (MPs), whether male or female. Addressing peace and security issues that affect women is not an issue only for women MPs; it is the role of all MPs to ensure that every member of society has the protections and opportunities to live peaceful and prosperous lives. All MPs – whether in their role as individual Members raising questions or promoting Private Members Bills, or as members of parliamentary committee or political caucuses – have a role to play in using the powers of their office to ensure that the WPS agenda is effectively implemented to improve the lives of all women and girls.

The Handbook begins with three chapters which aim to explain the core substance of the women, peace and security agenda, in the context of broader global and national commitments to gender equality and sustainable development. The focus of these chapters is to demonstrate the connection between efforts to support women’s peace and security and the broader achievement of national development goals. It should be noted that these Chapters are intended as a brief summary rather than an exhaustive explanation. For more detailed guidance on the background and substance of UNSCR 1325 and the deeper conceptual frameworks underpinning the women, peace and security agenda, it is recommended that parliamentarians refer to:


The next five chapters of the Handbook discuss in more detail how the women, peace and security agenda can be implemented in the context of each of the core functions of a parliament – namely, lawmaking, budgeting, oversight, and representation. These chapters are intended to provide parliamentarians and other stakeholders interested in working with MPs to progress the WPS agenda (whether inter-governmental agencies, development partners or CSOs) with ideas for action, in particular, by showcasing real-life, good practice examples from other countries.

Finally, the last two chapters of the Handbook reflect upon how parliamentary groupings and parliamentary staff can support efforts to progress women’s peace and security. At the end of each section a short series of questions is presented to stimulate reflection on current parliamentary roles and capacities as well as to foster discussion on how parliaments can improve their ability to proactively engage with this agenda.

Each substantive section of the Handbook is supported by: (1) Self-Assessment Questions, which can be used to supplement existing parliamentary self-assessment tools (see Chapter 3 below on the various SDGs self-assessment toolkits available); and (2) Action Points for Parliamentarians, which set out a range of ways that MPs could use their parliamentary powers and processes to progress the WPS agenda.

It is important to recognise that this Handbook and the various questions and action points identified are not intended as a “one-size-fits-all” template for action. This Handbook is designed in recognition of the reality that each parliament and its parliamentarians are well-placed to understand and analyse the domestic political, social and cultural context under which they operate (whether as individual MPs, or working with government officials, CSOs or constituents) in order to determine what can and should be done by parliament to ensure the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In that context, this Handbook seeks to provide ideas and suggestions for possible action, based on good practice and lessons learned from real-life experiences of parliaments around the world, in order to assist parliamentarians to take actions that will have a positive impact on the lives of women and girls around the world.
**Table of contents**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** .................................................................................................................................................. 3

1. “WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY” AGENDA: OVERVIEW ................................................................................................ 7

2. ALIGNING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA WITH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS .......................................................... 12
   ALIGNMENT WITH AGENDA 2030 AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .............................................................. 12
   ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS AND PROCESSES .......................................................... 15

3. PARLIAMENTS AND THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA ........................................................................... 19

4. ALIGNING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA WITH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS ............................................. 22
   WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY NATIONAL ACTION PLANS .......................................................................................... 22
   NATIONAL OR SECTORAL STRATEGIES OR DEVELOPMENT PLANS .................................................................................. 24

5. MAKING LAWS TO IMPLEMENT THE WPS AGENDA .................................................................................................... 27
   IDENTIFYING LAW REFORM PRIORITIES ......................................................................................................................... 27
   COMMON WPS LAW REFORM ISSUES .......................................................................................................................... 28
   PROGRESSING WPS LAW REFORMS ........................................................................................................................... 29

6. BUDGETING FOR WPS IMPLEMENTATION .................................................................................................................... 33
   ENSURING RESOURCES FOR WPS .................................................................................................................................. 33
   ENSURING WPS BUDGETS ARE EFFECTIVELY USED ........................................................................................................ 34

7. OVERSIGHT OF WPS IMPLEMENTATION ....................................................................................................................... 38
   COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT OF SPECIFIC WPS NAP ........................................................................................................... 38
   COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT ON SPECIFIC WPS SECTORAL ISSUES ..................................................................................... 39
   QUESTION TIME / INTERPELLATIONS .................................................................................................................................. 41
   PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS / RESOLUTIONS ................................................................................................................... 42
   INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT BODIES REPORTING TO PARLIAMENT .................................................................................. 43

8. REPRESENTATION ............................................................................................................................................................ 45
   PARLIAMENTARIANS AS REPRESENTATIVES ....................................................................................................................... 45
   PARLIAMENTARIANS AS GENDER-SENSITIVE PEACEBUILDERS ..................................................................................... 47
   PARLIAMENTARIANS AS PARTNERS ................................................................................................................................... 48

9. ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS .......................................................................................................................... 51
   CROSS-PARTY WOMEN’S CAUCUSES ..................................................................................................................................... 51
   CROSS-PARTY WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ........................................................................ 52

10. HARNESSING PARLIAMENTARY STAFF ...................................................................................................................... 54

11. USEFUL RESOURCES .................................................................................................................................................... 55
   UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS .......................................................................................................................... 55
   GUIDELINES & REPORTS ..................................................................................................................................................... 55

ANNEX 1: STATEMENT OF THE CEDAW COMMITTEE ON ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS ...... 56
1. “Women, Peace and Security” Agenda: Overview

**Understanding the gendered nature of conflict**

Since year 2000, global understanding of the gendered nature of conflict and peacebuilding has grown substantially. Not only do we now know that conflicts are experienced differently by women and girls than men and boys, but also that their roles in conflict and peacebuilding are complex and multidimensional. For centuries, women have suffered enormously during periods of conflict. They have long been targets of war, regularly subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and enslavement as part of the deliberate strategy of combatants. In recent decades, as war has morphed from interstate conflicts between competing armies, to include violent armed insurgencies and violent extremist groups, the impact on women has become even more troubling, with civilians treated as legitimate targets of violence, and women and girls attacked as a deliberate and strategic approach to warfare. Often left to manage home life when men went off to war, in many countries, women were also actively engaged in protecting their homes and communities. Women may act as peacebuilders, including through women’s organizations and by using their influence in families and communities. They may also be agents of violence, acting as supporters or combatants in the armed groups. Finally, they may move between these roles, depending on the situation they find themselves in and the opportunities they are given.4

Despite decades of effort by the women’s movement to focus attention on the gendered impact of conflict, however, the increase in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations during the 1990s saw the continued application of narrowly-focused military responses, with little specific attention paid to addressing the special needs of women in conflict-affected contexts. Women also continued to be overlooked for peacekeeping operations, and this exclusion continued during subsequent peace processes. In response to ongoing gender-blind international responses to conflict, despite the increasing use of UN peacekeeping forces to address conflicts around the world, the women’s movement ramped up its efforts to force governments to act. In 2000, this lobbying came to a head, with the UN Security Council leveraging the political momentum of the new millennium to officially acknowledge women’s exclusion from peace-making and peacebuilding and call for action.

**UNSCR 1325 and Four Pillars of WPS**

The Women, Peace and Security (“WPS”) agenda was formally initiated by the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which was adopted on 31 October 2000.5 UNSCR 1325 affirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building initiatives. The WPS agenda rests on four pillars, namely:

**Figure 1: Four Pillars of the Women, Peace and Security Framework**

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UNSCR 1325 is a wide-ranging resolution and reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.\(^6\)

UNSCR 1325 also urges all actors to take action to increase the participation of women, and calls on the UN to incorporate gender perspectives into all of its peace and security efforts. It also calls on stakeholders to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.

**Subsequent Resolutions**

In the years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council has adopted seven more resolutions on women, peace and security, intended to provide more detailed guidance on specific aspects of war and its impact on women, including for example, by tackling sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and engendering peacekeeping efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolution 1325(2000):</th>
<th>Addresses the impact of conflict on women and recognizes the contribution of women in preventing and resolving conflict and their role in maintaining international peace and security.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resolution 1820 (2008):</td>
<td>Recognizes conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war used by warring parties to achieve military or political end and resulting in impunity, which require strengthened efforts to end sexual violence in conflict.</td>
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<td>Resolution 1888(2009):</td>
<td>Provides for more effective implementation of Resolution 1820, including by establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide high-level leadership, and establishing women protection advisers within peacekeeping missions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution 1889 (2009):</td>
<td>Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, includes a strategy for increasing the number of women participating in peace talks, and calls for the development of global indicators to measure the implementation of Resolution 1325 by the UN and Member States. A set of 26 indicators have now been developed to track and account for implementation, organized into 4 Pillars: Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery. The indicators are listed in the Secretary-General’s Report (S/2010/498).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution 1960 (2010):</td>
<td>Reaffirms the earlier commitments required to address sexual violence in conflict and mandates the creation of tools to combat impunity by listing perpetrators and establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements.</td>
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**Resolution 2106 (2013):** Requests all actors, including the Security Council, to do more to implement earlier resolutions and to combat impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Acknowledges the importance of civil society in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.

**Resolution 2122 (2013):** Sets in place stronger measures to improve women’s participation and representation in conflict resolution, especially through leadership positions. Reaffirms that gender equality is central to achieving international peace and security. Sets out the need for humanitarian aid to ensure access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services.

**Resolution 2242 (2015):** On women’s roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism and improved Security Council working methods on women, peace and security.

**CEDAW General Recommendation No.30 (2015):** Links the women, peace and security agenda to CEDAW, providing detailed guidance on implementation of the agenda. (See Chapter 3 for more)

**Resolution 2272 (2016):** Provides measures to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.

**Resolution 2467 (2019):** Calls on Parties to conflicts around the world to put an end to sexual violence immediately, to prevent such acts in the future, introduces accountability measures for perpetrators of sexual violence and calls for effective support measures for victims of sexual violence to be implemented.

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**Relevance to all Country Contexts Alike**

UNSCR 1325 was not designed for any one type of development or conflict context; it applies equally to so-called “stable countries” that may still need to address issues such as violence against women or the gendered impacts of increasing radicalisation, as it does to countries in an ongoing violent conflict who urgently need to address protection and recovery issues. It should also be noted that UNSCR 1325 is also specifically directed at countries that deploy forces into peacekeeping operations. These countries still need to ensure that women are included in decision-making and leadership roles in both military and civilian peace operations, that all forces are properly trained in gender-sensitive peace operations, have the skills and resources to address the conflict issues faced by women and girls where they are deployed, and are properly managed to address any shortcomings in these areas (including punishing sexual or gender based violence committed by peacekeeping troops). Likewise, countries which provide more general development funding to support women’s empowerment and peacebuilding need to ensure that there contributions are conflict-sensitive and contribute to the WPS agenda.

**Implementation challenges and opportunities for parliamentary action**

It has been almost two decades since the endorsement of UNSCR 1325 and while there have been some improvements in how states protect and include women during and after conflict, nonetheless, women around the globe continue to suffer severely from the impacts of ongoing conflict around the globe. In an effort to learn from efforts to implement UNSCR 1325, in 2015 the UN Secretary General published a *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (“Global Study”), which reviewed the 15 years of implementation since UNSCR 1325 was adopted.\(^7\) The Global Study revealed that while the women, peace and security agenda has contributed to significant changes in international norms surrounding women’s political leadership and decision-making, there is still much work to be done to fully realize the potential of UNSCR 1325.

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making on peace and security, its effects on the lives of women at local levels has been limited. A variety of specific issues were identified for action, a number of which can be addressed by parliamentary action, for example: enabling legislation to protect and promote women’s rights is still often lacking (see Table 1 below for some common examples of such WPS-related laws); where WPS National Action Plans (NAP) have been developed they have still not been allocated sufficient funds from the national budget; there is lack of monitoring and accountability for WPS NAP implementation; and there is a lack of coordination across government bodies and levels of government, as well as with civil society, to ensure WPS activities are effectively implemented. These approaches will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Ensuring that the women, peace and security commitments have a meaningful impact on the lives of women and girls continues to be one of the most critical problems that still needs to be addressed. How can governments – and how can parliaments – take the words of UNSCR 1325 and its supporting resolutions and make them a lived reality for women and girls, especially for those living in conflict-affected contexts?

### Legislating UN Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

Since UNSCR 1325 was approved in 2000, it has been complemented by additional resolutions which focus attention on specific emerging and complex issue. For example, Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960 and 2106 draw specific attention to sexual violence and rape as a tool of war and call on Government to urgently take action.

It is very positive that parliaments are now starting to report on their own efforts to implement these resolutions. For example, Croatia reported as part of the 2018 NATO study of parliamentary implementation of WPS priorities that it passed the historic Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence during the Military Aggression against Republic of Croatia in the Homeland War, which responds to the sexual violence that was perpetrated during the wars of 1991-95. Under the law, rape victims receive a single payment of HRK100,000 (about US$14,500), in addition to a monthly HRK2,500 allowance, free counseling, health care, and legal assistance. At the time it was passed, it was considered the first law of its kind, providing financial compensation for acts of sexual violence against women.

Other parliaments also reported taking action to try to address the threat and/or reality of sexual violence for women fleeing conflict as asylum seekers. The Latvian Saeima (Parliament) passed the 2015 Asylum Law which requires that interviews with asylum seekers should be conducted by officials “sufficiently competent to take into account the personal and general circumstances of the asylum seeker” including sex, sexual orientation or gender identity. Croatia also adopted the 2015 International and Temporary Protection Act, which ensures that “appropriate support shall be provided for applications in relation to their [asylum seekers'] personal circumstances” through “special procedural and reception guarantees”, including gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and exposure to rape and sexual violence.

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10 Ibid. p.13.
11 Ibid. p.13.
**Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Raising Awareness of WPS and Measuring Preparedness in Parliament**

- Parliamentary staff can raise awareness of WPS in parliament by distributing key materials to MPs on the women, peace and security agenda (e.g. this Handbook, key resolutions, a WPS National Action Plan if one exists, any national reporting on WPS issues);

- Interested MPs and/or a Women’s Caucus and/or relevant parliamentary committee can work with staff, civil society organisations and/or development partners to organise a seminar for MPs on the WPS agenda;

- Interested MPs and/or a Women’s Caucus and/or relevant parliamentary committee can undertake a WPS self-assessment based on the questions in this Handbook, to assess the current work of parliament relevant to WPS and agree an action plan for moving forward. Experience has shown that such self-assessments can benefit from involving external partners (e.g. women’s organisations, local politicians and CSO leaders, development partners) who can offer their expertise, resources and/or facilitation support.

**Question for Parliament:**

- Have any information sessions or trainings been held for MPs on the WPS agenda?
  - ✓ If Parliament runs an Induction Programme for MPs following national elections, does the induction include (i) a briefing on gender and/or (ii) a briefing on WPS?
  - ✓ Has the Parliament (either through a relevant committee or via parliamentary staff) reached out to the national WPS focal point or relevant departments to provide a briefing/training to MPs on the WPS agenda?

- Has the parliamentary secretariat or a relevant Government department provided MPs with any materials or information seminars on the women, peace and security agenda?
  - ✓ Has or will this Global Handbook on Parliaments and the Women Peace and Security Agenda been shared with all MPs

- Has the Parliament undertaken a self-assessment to review the status of implementation of the WPS agenda and agree a set of priorities for moving forward?
2. Aligning the Women, Peace and Security Agenda with international development frameworks

Since the endorsement of UNSCR 1325, a number of further resolutions have been agreed that provide further guidance on what is required from Member States in order to comprehensively ensure women’s peace and security. At the same time, the international community has also continued to develop and implement a range of global frameworks that also seek to contribute to women’s peace and security. Most recently, following the publication of two major UN reports on peacebuilding in 2015 – namely the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations\(^\text{12}\) and the global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325\(^\text{13}\) – the UN General Assembly and Security Council passed complementary “peacebuilding resolutions” in April 2016 (referred to as the “Sustaining Peace” resolutions)\(^\text{14}\) which addressed sustaining peace at all stages of a conflict and in all its dimensions, with specific references to the needs of women and girls in line with UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions. Together, the web of global resolutions on peace, peacebuilding, sustainable development and human rights combine with UNSCR 1325 to provide a package of commitments that Member States are committed to implementing.

Alignment with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, 193 Member States of the United Nations endorsed Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (“2030 Agenda”). The 2030 Agenda is supported by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),\(^\text{15}\) which together set out universal, long-term development objectives intended to guide the world towards more sustainable economic, environmental and social development. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs came into force on 1 January 2016 and all countries are now moving forward with planning and implementation efforts to achieve the SDGs by December 2030.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 3: Sustainable Development Goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</td>
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\(^{13}\) Coomaraswamy, above n 6.


\(^{15}\) The SDGs replace the 8 Millennium Development Goals that were established as global development goals to be achieved from 2000-15.
Although the women, peace and security agenda was endorsed in 2000, the newer SDGs do not replace the agenda, but instead complement and strengthen it. These SDGs also complement the global gender equality commitments that were reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action agreed in 1995, an agenda which has driven global efforts for almost 25 years. The Beijing Platform captured early efforts to focus attention on women, peace and security. These efforts eventually resulted in UNSCR 1325. The aims of the Beijing Platform, UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions are now captured in the SDGs and efforts to implement these various commitments will contribute to achievement of SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG-8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (inclusive governance and peace):

SDG 5 commits countries to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. SDG 5 is broken down into 6 targets, with Target 5.2 specifically calling on Governments to “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”. This tracks closely with the women, peace and security agenda, but additional targets related to ending all forms of discrimination against women (Target 15.1) and increasing women’s role in decision making (Target 15.5) also align closely with the agenda. This last target is particularly relevant to parliamentarians. Troublingly, research by the Inter-Parliamentary Union has shown that both women MPs and staff are vulnerable to experiencing sexism, abuse and violence as part of their work environment. SDG Target 5.5, when read with the WPS agenda, encourages MPs to reflect on whether their own parliament has in place policies and mechanisms designed to ensure safe conditions for women to participate on an equal basis in the work of the legislature.

SGD 8 commits countries to promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. SDG 8 is broken down into ten targets, a number of which directly relate to the need for women, including in conflict-affected context, to have secure work. Target 8.5 calls for “decent work for all men and women”, while Target 8.7 calls for an end to forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking and Target 8.8 calls for safe working environments for all workers, including women migrants and those in precarious employment.

SDG 16 commits to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. There can often be trade-offs within countries regarding which SDGs are more important for a country’s development aspirations, with SDG 16 sometimes being treated as less important for governments whose focus is on economic growth, poverty

reduction, health or education. However, the risks of not investing in SDG 16+ are considerable: the impact of conflict and violence can reverse development gains; injustice and exclusion can fuel violence; insecurity, lack of access to justice and inequality is cyclical and mutually reinforcing and can lead to the outbreak of violent conflict.\(^{17}\) SDG 16 is supported by 12 targets, a number of which specifically focus on the need to ensure the rule of law, protection from violence and addressing the causes and effects of conflict, and with a target on ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7) specifically highlighting the role of the parliament to promote gender responsive decision-making. This approach recognises that women’s peace and security is inseparable from society’s peace and security, and the parliaments have an instrumental role in ensuring that laws concerning peace, justice and inclusion, including issues related to WPS, are discussed and adopted.

**Parliamentary efforts to promote SDGs implementation**

Parliaments have a constitutional – and a moral – responsibility to support national and global sustainable development efforts. From 2000 to 2015, the global development agenda was guided by the Millennium Development Goals, a set of 8 Goals which were primarily developed and endorsed by executive government. Since 2015, these Goals were replaced by the 2030 Agenda and supporting SDGs, which were much more participatorily developed, including through inputs from parliamentarians from around the world. Parliamentarians were involved via regional groupings, as well as the global Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As describe in this Chapter, the SDGs clearly interlink with and reinforce the more focused WPS agenda; the both SDGs and WPS reflect the understanding that peace, conflict and inclusion (incl. of women and girls) are inextricably linked and parliaments have a role in ensuring this understanding is at the heart of their countries development (laws, policies, programmes).

Since the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, considerable attention has focused on ensuring that parliamentarians are engaged as active partners in the process of implementing the SDGs. Two guides have been published to assist MPs to identify how they can most effectively use their law-making, budgeting, oversight and representational roles to effectively progress the SDGs agenda:

2. *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit* (UNDP, IPU).\(^{19}\)

UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) have been working with parliaments across the world to encourage and facilitate parliamentary self-assessments based on the abovementioned Toolkit, which enable MPs to identify how their parliaments can systematically work towards supporting SDGs implementation. This *Handbook on the Role of Parliaments as Partners in Advancing the Women, Peace and Security* is intended to be used alongside such an SDGs self-assessment, to add an additional layer of questions to specifically assess implementation of SDG-5, with a specific reference to women’s peace and security.


\(^{18}\)https://www.undp.org/content/dam/serbia/Publications%20and%20reports/English/DobraUprava/UNDP_SRB_Parliaments%20role%20in%20implementing%20the%20SDGs.pdf

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Integrating WPS in Parliamentary Processes on the SDG

➢ If Parliament has or will undertake an SDGs and parliament self-assessment process, the Questions in this Handbook can be used to supplement such a self-assessment to ensure that parliament integrates the WPS agenda into its efforts to promote the SDGs;

➢ If a parliamentary committee/s has been tasked with oversight of the SDGs, these committees could also review progress to implement the WPS agenda, in support of SDG-5 (gender equality), SGD-8 (decent work) and SDG-16 (peace, justice and inclusion) (see Chapter 8 for more on promoting the WPS agenda through parliamentary committees).

Question for Parliament:

✓ Does Parliament have a committee which is mandated to monitor national and international SDGs implementation progress and/or has the SDGs agenda been mainstreamed into the mandates of one or more existing committees?

✓ Has any parliamentary committee undertaken an inquiry into how best to align the WPS agenda with national SDG plans and programming?

Alignment with international human rights frameworks and processes

Since the establishment of the United Nations, the protection and promotion of human rights has been at the heart of the commitments of member states to ensure that their people can live safe, peaceful and prosperous lives. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out these commitments as early as 1948 and has been followed by numerous subsequent declarations and conventions which elaborated upon those fundamental principles. Importantly, implementation of the commitments in these declarations and conventions are continually monitored, officially by state-centred UN committees and processes, as well as by international and local civil society groups. The most relevant of these human rights frameworks and processes are described below.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Even before the endorsement of UNSCR 1325, frameworks already existed at the international level which sought to ensure women’s rights and gender equality in all spheres of life, including as a prerequisite to peace. Most notably, one of the seven core international human rights treaties was specifically dedicated to women’s rights, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ("CEDAW"). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons also recognise the intersectionality of the identities of women and girls, an approach which also informs efforts to implement UNSCR 1325.

In terms of peace and security, CEDAW very clearly underpins the priorities elaborated upon in UNSCR 1325. CEDAW was drafted in 1979 and came into force in 1981. Since that time, it has become one of the most ratified treaties in the history of the UN, with 189 States Parties (only Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga and the USA have not ratified). It sets out a framework of rights and duties, calling for action by States parties to address ongoing discrimination and inequality in political, social, economic and cultural life.

None of CEDAW’s substantive provisions specifically refer to the WPS agenda, but the Preamble recognises that “the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields”. To provide more explicit guidance for States parties, in 2013, the UN CEDAW Committee issued General Recommendation No.30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations (“GR-30”), which provided authoritative guidance to countries that have ratified CEDAW on concrete measures to ensure women’s rights are protected before, during and after conflict. GR-30 explicitly affirms CEDAW’s linkages with the women, peace and security agenda. It also makes clear that CEDAW applies in all forms of conflict and post-conflict settings and addresses crucial issues facing women in these settings, including violence and challenges in access to justice and education, employment and health. It also provides guidance on the obligation of States parties’ to ensure due diligence in respect of crimes against women by non-State actors.

For more detailed guidance on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30, please refer to the UN Women Sourcebook on GR-30.

The role of parliamentary Foreign Affairs / International Relations Committees in overseeing CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 implementation

Almost every legislature has a parliamentary committee with a mandate to oversee issues related to international relations or foreign affairs. This recognises the importance of including the legislative branch in international affairs, specifically by ensuring the legislature has an active role in monitoring the executive branch’s activities in relation to foreign policy. In many countries, such parliamentary committees have an active role in treaty oversight, but they may also have more general powers to inquire into issues, processes or agreements with an international element, including in relation to human rights, trade or debt.

In relation to the women, peace and security agenda, such parliamentary committees can play an active role in overseeing national efforts, in particular through the process of overseeing CEDAW implementation, in cooperation with other relevant committees, such as a gender equality or women’s affairs committees. All countries that have ratified CEDAW must regularly report to the UN CEDAW Committee on CEDAW implementation, including in relation to WPS issues. In 2010, CEDAW issued specific guidance on the role of Parliaments in relation to CEDAW (see Annex 1). For example, national CEDAW reports should be tabled in parliament for discussion, at least by the relevant parliamentary committee. Once the CEDAW Committee provides its written recommendations to the Government, these should also be tabled in parliament, in order to identify what, if any, action parliament should take to progress the recommendations.

Recommendations from the CEDAW Committee often include guidance on law reform priorities. For example, the very first recommendation of the CEDAW Committee made in the last reporting cycle for Kyrgyzstan specifically stated:21

The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with the parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites the Zhogorku Kenesh [parliament] to take the steps necessary to implement the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.

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http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRlCAGhKb7yhgdlff%2fiazrVw%2bcyfdY9Gx26eGR%2bzMgg6p3lna5xhd51o0RnqoHzQ8WaQc0jNUS9BJCpsakBbvN%2bZ7aNQ4cjoDP7c2eVmsalshkhMJD
UN Universal Periodic Review Process

As described more specifically above in relation to CEDAW, the core human rights instruments agreed by Member States each has a process in place designed to oversee implementation commitments. CEDAW has the UN CEDAW Committee, but numerous other such committees have been established, requiring Member States to regularly report on their progress and giving other Member States an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and priority areas for action. In 2006, in an effort to support a more comprehensive and joined-up approach to national human rights reporting, the UN replaced the previous UN Commission on Human Rights with a new UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and established a Universal Period Review process, which would require states to report to the UNHRC every five years on their progress in promoting and protecting human rights.22

The Universal Period Review (UPR) process is designed to “prompt, support, and expand the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground... [by] assessing States’ human rights records and addressing human rights violations.... The UPR also aims to provide technical assistance to States and enhance their capacity to deal effectively with human rights challenges and to share best practices in the field of human rights among States and other stakeholders”.23 Importantly, because the UPR is intended to enable Member States and their peers to comprehensively and holistically discuss national human rights challenges, it is a very useful venue to address the special human rights implication of the WPS agenda. States are required to report across all of their international human rights commitments, which enables reviewing States to then provide observations and recommendations which take into account the cross-cutting issues affecting women and girls whose lives are affected by conflict and instability.

Parliamentary engagement in the UPR process

Legislatures have a critical role to play in protecting and promoting human rights, including through their engagement with the UPR process. Parliaments can engage during the in-country process of preparing the national UPR report, for example, by requesting from the executive a copy of the draft UPR report and reviewing it through a relevant parliamentary committee. Parliamentarians can also be included as part of the delegation which presents the UPR report to the Human Rights Council, both in order to hear first-hand the inquiries being made by the HRC and their questions and suggestions for action. Once the HRC issues its final recommendations on the national UPR report, parliament can also formally review those recommendations through a relevant parliamentary committee and recommend specific action, for example, law reform.

In 2017, the General Assembly endorsed a resolution to specifically look at the contribution of parliaments to the UPR process.24 In May 2018, the UN issued a report produced in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union on “The contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review”.25 The UN/IPU study provides considerable detail of how parliaments across the world have been using their powers to promote human rights, including women’s rights in the context of peace and security. A survey of countries showed that out of 56 who responded, 35 had dedicated human rights committees. Although the mandates of

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legislatures and their committees varied, they had a lot in common, including initiating legislative reviews and amendment, undertaking parliamentary oversight of the executive’s efforts to fulfil its human rights obligations, engaging in parliamentary debates and hearings on human rights-related issues and engaging with human rights stakeholders (including national human rights institutions and civil society).\textsuperscript{26} The Study annexed Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights, which aimed to guide parliaments on the setting up and functioning of parliamentary human rights committees.

\textbf{Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: WPS and Treaty Reporting}

In practice, UPR and treaty reporting processes provide multiple opportunities for parliaments to engage with WPS issues.\textsuperscript{27}

- During the preparation of the national UPR and/or CEDAW report, although the final report is produced and submitted by the Executive branch, parliaments can also hold hearings, the outcomes and recommendations from which can be integrated into the final national report that is submitted to the UN. In this regard, the legislature can play an important role in facilitating feedback directly from communities as well as from civil society;

- MPs can also be involved in the official UN processes which review the UPR and CEDAW reports. Some national delegations specifically include MPs whose remit covers human rights and/or women’s rights. This is an excellent opportunity for MPs to champion women’s human rights internationally;

- Once the UPR and CEDAW Concluding Reports are produced by the Human Rights Council and CEDAW Committee respectively, MPs can also call for the report to be tabled in parliament and referred to relevant parliamentary committees for more detailed consideration and action;

\textbf{Question for Parliament:}

- Does Parliament have an active parliamentary committee which oversees foreign affairs issues, including reporting to the UN?
- Does the Government submit its regular CEDAW reports (and other UN human rights reports) to Parliament for consideration?
- Does a parliamentary committee review national CEDAW and UPR reports, including any recommendations received from the UN human rights bodies, in particular, in relation to implementing the women, peace and security agenda?


3. Parliaments and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

As the elected representatives of the people, parliamentarians have a critical duty to ensure that all people, including women and girls, can live their lives safely, securely and peacefully and have the opportunity to be involved in the processes and programmes directed at building and sustaining peaceful and secure societies on an equal footing. Parliamentarians have a unique role in the system of government – they are elected to represent the views of their people. To this end, they have a constitutional duty to use their powers in the legislature to promote laws, budgets, policies and programmes that ensure the protection and promotion of every person’s human rights, including the right to be free from violence and to live peaceful and secure lives.

WPS and core functions of parliament

Through their constitutional mandates, parliamentarians are valuable partners in ensuring the accountable, inclusive, participatory and transparent governance that is necessary to achieve sustainable development for all. The core functions and powers of parliaments provide MPs with key avenues for promoting the WPS agenda. Specifically, there are four key functions that practically all legislatures have as part of their mandate, though their ability to act may be stronger or weaker, depending on the national context. These functions include law-making, budget approval and oversight, oversight and control of the executive branch, as well as representation and outreach.

Through direct involvement in the localisation of the WPS agenda as well as through each of their four core functions, Parliaments have opportunities to promote and implement work to ensure achievement of the women, peace and security agenda. Table 1 summarises some of the entry points for parliaments to support the women, peace and security agenda, including some specific thematic and issues-based activities that may be of particular relevance. The next four chapters discuss these approaches in more detail.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WPS planning &amp; monitoring</th>
<th>Law-making</th>
<th>Budgeting</th>
<th>Oversight / Monitoring</th>
<th>Representation / Outreach</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Specific enshrining WPS commitments in legislation</td>
<td>✓ Resources to support WPS coordination agency to support and monitor whole-of-government WPS NAP implementation</td>
<td>✓ Annual review of WPS NAP implementation by the executive branch</td>
<td>✓ Inclusion of MPs in WPS Inter-Government Coordination Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Requiring Govts by law to produce a WPS NAP and annual WPS reports</td>
<td>✓ Resources to strengthen capacities of various WPS implementing agencies</td>
<td>✓ Regular committee review of UPR, CEDAW and other recommendations from all treaty bodies related to women’s rights and GBV, incl WPS reporting</td>
<td>✓ Local MP community forums to raise awareness of WPS agenda/principles (in collaboration with local govt and civil society)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Budget Committee oversight to ensure resources allocated for WPS provided and expended effectively</td>
<td>✓ Review of implementation of laws listed under “Law-Making” pillar to identify areas for improvement</td>
<td>✓ Committee review of implementation of laws listed under “Law-Making” pillar to identify areas for improvement</td>
<td>✓ Proactively meeting with women / youth rights activists and bodies on the ground to identify how MP/Parliament can best support their WPS priorities and work</td>
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Prevention: Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post conflict situations;

| ✓ Legislative review to identify existing discriminatory laws for amendment (e.g. marriage, inheritance, ownership, nationality, etc) | ✓ Resources to support institutions tasked with implementing laws (eg. gender commission, human rights commission, MOD, MOJ, Police/security sector) | ✓ Regular committee review of UPR, CEDAW and other recommendations from all treaty bodies related to women’s rights and GBV, incl WPS reporting | ✓ Local MP community forums to address local tensions and potential conflict triggers and their gendered impact (in collaboration with local govt and civil society) |
| ✓ Anti-discrimination laws | ✓ Resources for specific programmes (eg. PVE) | ✓ Committee review of implementation of laws listed under “Law-Making” pillar to identify areas for improvement | |
| ✓ Gender equality legislation | ✓ ✓ ✓ | ✓ ✓ ✓ | |
| ✓ PVE laws | ✓ ✓ ✓ | ✓ ✓ ✓ | |
| ✓ Human and sexual trafficking laws | ✓ ✓ ✓ | ✓ ✓ ✓ | |

Participation: Women’s equal participation and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels

| ✓ Quotas and other measures for increasing women in national parliament + local bodies + key public bodies | ✓ Resources for increasing political participation of women (including local and national levels) | ✓ Review of levels of women’s participation in peace and security decision-making | ✓ Parliamentary Women’s Caucus supported to work on WPS issues (drawing on expertise from officials and civil society, as possible) |
| ✓ Quotas and other measures to encourage increase in women in security forces | ✓ Women candidates training | ✓ Review of national peacekeeping efforts, incl. WPS issues | ✓ MPs mentoring women leaders at local level |
| ✓ Quotas and other measures for increasing women in diplomatic corps and/or peace negotiation and mediation teams | ✓ Resources for training of security personnel on gender & peace | ✓ | ✓ MPs mentoring potential women candidates |
| Protection: Women and girls are protected from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and their rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations; | ✓ Employment laws, property and inheritance laws, family law | ✓ SGBV law | ✓ Resources to implement SGBV legislation (eg. women’s shelters, counselling services, police services, court processes) | ✓ Review of effectiveness of existing criminal or SGBV laws and their implementation | ✓ Local MP community forums to discuss local SGBV issues and challenges and how the rights of women and girls are otherwise affected (in collaboration with local govt and civil society) |
| Relief & recovery: Specific relief needs of women are met and their capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations. | ✓ Laws promoting reconciliation and compensation for women in post-conflict situation | ✓ Resources to implement Govt relief programmes, incl for war-affected women | ✓ Review of relevant Govt DDR programmes | ✓ Review of relevant Govt Women’s Economic Empowerment programmes | ✓ Local MP Forums designed to support peacebuilding, e.g. to discuss local conflict trigger issues, speak with women re specific issues (in collaboration with local govt and civil society) |
4. Aligning the Women, Peace and Security Agenda with national development frameworks

The women, peace and security agenda had a strong global dimension, reflected in the specific guidance UNSCR 1325 included in relation to UN peacekeeping operations, but it was always the intention that the agenda was to be implemented domestically as well as internationally, to ensure that the security of women and girls was protected and promoted through domestic state action, as well as through their inclusion in peace negotiations and operations both domestically and abroad. In this regard then, it is useful for national development frameworks to consider the guidance offered by the various resolutions that together combine to form the women, peace and security agenda to assess whether and how national action needs to be taken. The localisation of the WPS agenda aligns with broader global commitments that Governments have made to localise Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and the overarching recognition that “there can be no sustainable development without peace”.

Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans

Following the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council encouraged Member States to develop government-led National Action Plans (NAP) or other national level strategies which would enable countries to identify their local WPS priorities and assign, resources, responsibilities and deadlines for their implementation. As of April 2019, 79 nations have created NAPs.28

Figure 4: WPS National Action Plans Globally29

28 http://peacewomen.org/member-states
29 http://peacewomen.org/member-states
The development of WPS NAPs should be done through an inclusive, participatory process that brings together relevant government agencies, the national security services (both police and military), civil society – and ideally parliament. In practice however, the involvement of parliaments in the developments of NAPs has been variable.

Most commonly, the WPS NAP development process has been led by the either the national women’s ministry or department, or a ministry responsible for national security issues. The lead agency then sets up some form of inter-governmental working group, drawing together different sectoral actors, to undertake a process of problem analysis, prioritisation of issues and then development of the action plan in response. This NAP development process is an ideal opportunity for parliament to get involved in setting the priorities for national WPS implementation. MPs may be directly involved in the drafting process and/or the final WPS NAP may be officially submitted for consideration and endorsement by the legislature.

### Engaging Parliamentarians in the development of National Action Plans

Good practice suggests that MPs should be involved in the development of National Action Plans as early as possible. MPs have considerable knowledge that can benefit the NAP, most notably, their knowledge of the most critical issues in their home constituencies, but also their more general understanding of how law reform can be progressed, how budgets can be adapted to support WPS and how parliamentary committees can be harnessed to inquire into critical WPS issues.

Where a WPS NAP is under development, whether or not the parliament is officially included in the drafting process, it may still be useful to use this period as an opportunity for awareness-raising with Members of Parliament on WPS and its national relevance. This will lay the groundwork for MPs to feel more ownership over the final WPS NAP and to take charge of ensuring ongoing oversight of its implementation. A specific parliamentary seminar or briefing could be organised for MPs which could be used to position the WPS agenda within overarching development frameworks, such as the SDGs Agenda and any national development plans or vision documents. Such a seminar would also provide an opportunity to start building commitment within parliament for elements of the NAP which may require parliamentary support, most notably, law reforms and peacebuilding in constituencies. UNDP supported such WPS awareness-raising workshops in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan through the “Global Project on the Role of Parliaments as Partners in Women, Peace and Security (2018-19)”. These workshops were organised with local partners and included relevant government officials to brief MPs on key issues. Including officials in such briefings facilitates relationship-building between the Parliaments and the executive branch, which is useful for ongoing monitoring efforts.

In Sierra Leone, following on from a UNDP-supported “WPS Workshop for Parliamentarians” in July 2018, women MPs became more actively engaged in the process of designing the second Sierra Leone WPS NAP (SiLNAP), which was launched by the Government in August 2018. The Chair of the Women’s Caucus participated as a member of the National WPS Steering Committee and participated in several planning meetings on the SiLNAP drafting processes. She was also part of the team to validate the assessment tools to be used for the consultations. Eight MPs – four male and four female – then participated in the regional consultations on the second SiLNAP draft and contributed their own inputs and ideas into the draft. Similarly, the Parliament of Montenegro was involved in designing the country’s first NAP through the participation of the chairperson of its Gender Equality Committee in its drafting.30

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Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Engaging in the WPS NAP process

➢ Parliamentarians can be included in the working group responsible for the WPS NAP development process. Including parliamentarians at this point can inject into the process their understanding of the specific needs and priorities of their electorate based on their interactions with constituents and with other stakeholders working at community level, such as local government officials, civil society organisations or women’s advocates. It can also be a first step towards generating buy-in for relevant law reform and budgetary aspects of the WPS NAP that will need to be approved by parliament.

➢ Even where parliament may not have been involved in the development of the WPS NAP, once endorsed by the Government, the WPS NAP can be submitted to Parliament by the responsible Minister, for acknowledgement and/or endorsement.

➢ Regular progress reports should also be submitted to Parliament to enable monitoring of implementation (see Chapter 7 below for more on parliamentary monitoring).

Question for Parliament:

✓ If a WPS National Action Plan is or has been developed for the country, are there opportunities for Members of Parliament to be involved, either during the consultation and drafting process or once a final draft has been agreed?

✓ If a WPS National Action Plan is or has been developed for the country, was the final NAP submitted to Parliament for its information, debate and/or endorsement?

National or sectoral strategies or development plans

For a variety of different reasons, not all countries have developed a WPS National Action Plan. In some cases, WPS may simply not have been prioritised amongst a range of other pressing national agendas. In other countries however, a deliberate decision has been made to integrate WPS issues into other national development plans, in recognition of the importance of mainstreaming gender issues across all sectors. Lessons may have been learned that it will be more efficient and effective to integrate WPS issues into sectoral plans, to ensure that they attract both the human and financial resource and political will necessary to ensure their implementation.

Most commonly, a national gender strategy will be developed, which will include an analysis of the issues that are relevant to women’s security, with specific programming recommendations attached to that analysis. Some countries have even passed legislation that requires such a gender strategy to be produced and to be presented to parliament, which is an excellent opportunity for MPs to advocate for WPS issues. For example, in Iceland, the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008 requires that:

Within one year following a general election, the Minister shall present to the Althingi [Parliament] a motion for a parliamentary resolution on a four-year gender equality action programme after having received proposals made by the ministries, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Council. ...The gender equality action programme shall include projects intended to secure equal status and equal rights of women and men in Icelandic society (cf. Article 1). The actions planned, and the estimated funding for projects, shall be itemised in the programme. The report presented by the Minister on the situation and
developments of gender equality issues to the Gender Equality Forum (cf. Article 10) shall accompany the proposed parliamentary resolution.  

In some countries, the national human rights machinery may develop strategies to address the specific needs of women affected by conflict, as part of their overall work to protect marginalised groups. Instead or in addition, national defence, police, peacekeeping or security strategies may also include a specific gender analysis, with recommendations and resources then directed at addressing key WPS gaps or priorities. Thus for example, sectoral strategies/policies/action plans may include WPS priorities such as: establishing specific Women’s Desks to handle SGBV complaints at police stations; enabling the National Human Rights Commission to receive complaints relating to war violence; or requiring gender-sensitive training for defence personnel deployed as peacekeepers.

Integrating women’s peace and security needs into national plans in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka experienced civil conflict for more than 25 years, which came to an end in 2009. Women were deeply affected by the conflict, with many women directly impacted by violence, as war widows, wives of the disappeared, internally displaced people and ex-combatants. At the end of the war, the many husbands lost to war resulted in a disproportionate number of female headed households as well.

Despite the gendered impacts of the conflict, the Sri Lankan Government has not developed a WPS National Action Plan. Instead, the Government has mainstreamed the needs of the substantial proportion of women affected by the conflict into relevant national sectoral plans. For example, the National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2017-2021) includes numerous specific priorities for addressing the needs of women affected by the war, identifying specific priorities for action by the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs, as well as the Ministries of Justice, Law and Order, Rehabilitation, Health, Agriculture and Local Government. This approach recognises the need not only for justice, but for women’s economic and physical security. The Policy Framework and National Plan for Action to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka (2016-2020) similarly takes a cross-sectoral approach to addressing SGBV, identifying priorities for eight Ministries. Both Plans also call on the Government to develop a specific Policy Framework for Women Headed Households, to provide more detailed guidance on addressing the special needs of these households, which are a continuing reminder of the impact of the war.

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Integrating WPS in National Development Planning

➢ In many countries, WPS NAPs are not produced but national development or sectoral plans are developed, which address WPS issues (eg. plans on gender equality, human rights, peacebuilding). Parliamentarians can be included in the working group/s responsible for developing such plans;

➢ Even where parliament may not have been involved in the development of such plans, once endorsed by the Government, they can be submitted to Parliament by the responsible Minister, for acknowledgement and/or endorsement;

➢ Regular progress reports should also be submitted to Parliament to enable monitoring of implementation (see Chapter 7 below for more on parliamentary monitoring).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question for Parliament:</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ If a WPS National Action Plan has not been developed, has Parliament inquired into whether WPS issues have been integrated into other relevant national or sectoral development plans?</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Have any national development or sectoral development plans been prepared which includes WPS issues?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If so, was the plan/s developed with parliamentary input, either during development or once a draft was produced?</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Has gender equality legislation been passed that requires, at a minimum, that some form of gender equality action plan is developed by the Government and presented to parliament?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If so, does the plan include issues related to WPS?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- If so, was the plan submitted to Parliament for information or endorsement?</td>
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</table>
5. Making laws to implement the WPS agenda

The power to enact the laws which govern society is one of the most important powers a legislature can wield. MPs are responsible for reviewing, debating, amending and enacting legislation. Most commonly, draft laws are developed by the executive branch, but in some countries, MPs also have the power to initiate legislation, either because the legislature is a truly co-equal branch of government with powers to draft and propose new laws or through so-called “Private Members Bill”, which enable individual MPs or groups of like-minded MPs to table their own draft laws. Advocating for, initiating, debating and enacting law reform is a key contribution that parliaments can make to supporting implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

Identifying law reform priorities

In countries where a WPS National Action Plan has been developed, law reform priorities may already have been identified. In some countries, reports from the UPR process, the UN CEDAW Committee and other relevant human rights processes may also contain relevant recommendations for law reform. National sectoral strategies, in sectors such as human rights, gender equality, defence national security and peacebuilding, could also contain guidance on priority issues or areas for legislation to be enacted or amended.

In support of law reforms to promote women’s peace and security, Members of Parliament – whether in their role as members of a relevant parliamentary committee, as part of a Women’s Caucus or as part of a WPS Parliamentary Group (see Chapter 9 below) – may want to request parliamentary staff to undertake a Gender and WPS Law Reform Assessment to identify which laws need to be amended and whether any new laws are needed to implement the WPS agenda. (Ideally this will be embedded within a broader whole-of-government process to identify and address WPS issues, for example, as part of a WPS NAP process.) In support of achievement of SDG-5: Gender Equality, ideally any such assessment would examine not just law reforms to promote WPS, but also to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment more broadly.

At a minimum, such an assessment would require an analysis of existing national strategies, to identify law reform priorities that the Government has already committed to. Where there has been no systematic analysis of WPS issues undertaken already, an additional analysis may also be required to assess whether any additional law reform issues need to be included.

Depending on the size and complexity of the law reforms that are required, MPs may wish to discuss results of any Gender and WPS Law Reform Assessment to prioritise which law reforms should be progressed in what order. This may even result in the development of some form of medium to long-term legislative reform agenda, which could be used to guide efforts of both the executive branch and parliament to draft and enact of laws.

Parliamentary rules requiring a gender review of proposed laws

In some countries, parliament is required to undertake a specific gender assessment of draft legislation to identify whether a proposed law is gender-sensitive and protects, and does not diminish, gender equality and women’s rights. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, the Law on Normative Legal Acts 2009 guides the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) on how it reviews draft laws. Article 20 specifically requires that draft laws be subjected to an analysis to assess their impact on human
rights protection, gender, anti-corruption, and ecological protection. In Fiji, s.110(1) of Parliament’s Standing Orders provides the mandates of committees to review draft laws and undertake inquiries and then states at s.110(2): “Where a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.”

**Common WPS law reform issues**

There are no specific templates for legislation to promote women, peace and security, but experience around the world shows that parliaments can and have taken action to legislate on a range of different issues. For example:

*Non-discrimination, equality and equal participation*

- Some countries have passed omnibus gender equality laws, which set out general principles in relation to equality, non-discrimination and women’s rights, but may also include the establishment of key gender equality structures (such as a Gender Commission or National Women’s Council). Such laws may also include specific provisions relating to women’s involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution;

- Legislation outlawing gender discrimination is increasingly common and may include some form of institutional mechanism to oversee its implementation (eg. a Sex Discrimination Commission/er or Human Rights Commission;

- Legislation introducing affirmative action quotas, not only in relation to women’s participation in national and sub-national political institutions and decision-making processes, but also to specifically require gender quotas in relation to military and police recruitment, recruitment into the public service, peacekeeping deployments and diplomatic deployments (especially in relation to peace operations);

*Preventing and responding to violence and trafficking*

- Legislation to address SGBV is commonly passed as a stand-alone law or package of laws, or through amendments to an existing criminal code;

- Legislation specifically addressing SGBV committed in conflict contexts, including specific provisions allowing for extra-territorial jurisdiction to allow prosecution of offences committed overseas (eg. by peacekeepers);

- Legislation providing criminal and civil penalties for sexual harassment (whether in the workplace, on public transport or in public generally) is increasingly seen as part of the WPS agenda, which seeks to ensure women feel safe at all times;

- Legislation outlawing human trafficking, including specific provisions allowing for extra-territorial jurisdiction to allow prosecution of offences committed overseas (eg. by peacekeepers);

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➢ Gender-sensitive legislation on transitional justice, both in terms of process (i.e. including women) and substantive issues (i.e. specific topics relevant to women and girls);
➢ Gender-sensitive legislation addressing the prevention of violent extremism and/or radicalisation, taking into account the different experiences of men and women in such contexts;
➢ Legislation providing for economic support for people affected by conflict, including gender-sensitive provisions addressing the special needs of female ex-combatants, war widows, children orphaned by conflict and/or post-conflict female-headed households;

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**Integrating law reform analysis and action into WPS National Action Plans in Nigeria and Iraq**

In a number of countries, a law reform needs assessment is part of the research undertaken to develop the WPS National Action Plan. This assessment then feeds into the final priorities and strategies included in the NAP. For example, the Nigerian WPS NAP (2017-2020) identifies 5 Pillars of work, which are supported by 5 core strategies for implementing the priorities identified in the NAP; one of these core implementation strategies is “Legislation and Policies”. Throughout the detailed Action Plan that is annexed to the NAP, more specific information is provided regarding the specific law reforms that are needed to achieve the NAPs overall objectives.

The Iraq WPS NAP (2014-18) identifies “Legislation and Law Enforcement” as one of the 6 pillars requiring action. This section of the NAP states that the “overall objective of this pillar is: Harmonization national legislation with international standards and mechanisms for women’s rights, including UNSCR1325, annulling articles which violate women rights and promulgating/enacting legislation that protects and promotes them”. Two strategic objectives are identified: “Adopting legislation that respects the basic universal human rights for all women and men; [and] Ending impunity for perpetrators and enhancing legislation”.

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**Progressing WPS law reforms**

Different legislatures have different procedures for drafting, submitting and enacting laws. Most commonly, the executive branch (through the Attorney General’s Department or the Ministry of Justice) will be responsible for initiating and drafting legislation or amendments. In such cases, although MPs are less likely to initiate a draft Bill, Members can still be active in pushing for action, for example, by raising a question about law reform during Question Time, by proposing a motion on WPS issues to draw the attention of parliament and the government to a key concern or by using the committee inquiry process as an opportunity to discuss a WPS issue in detail and propose specific legislative reforms in the form of committee recommendations.

Once a Government-initiated Bill is finalised, it will be submitted by a Government Minister to the legislature for debate, amendment and/or enactment. During this process, draft Bills will commonly be referred to a relevant parliamentary committee, depending on the subject matter, and will be reviewed and discussed in more detail. For MPs who are committee members, this is a very important process, as committee members can take this opportunity to propose amendments to the draft law, if they can convince their committee members to agree. Once the committee process is complete, the draft Bill returns to the main plenary for debate, amendment and a final vote. Where parliaments have two houses, this process may be repeated in both Houses.

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http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/NAPNigeria.pdf
34
In many presidential or semi-presidential systems, the legislature has more power to initiate its own draft laws. In such contexts, groups of parliamentarians (grouped by party or by issue) or even individual parliamentarians can develop their own draft law and then work within the rules of the House to advocate for their Bill to be included on the legislative agenda for a hearing. Where a Bill is accepted for consideration by the leadership of the legislature, it then goes through a similar process as described above, usually involving a committee review, followed by debate, amendment and enactment in the main plenary.

In some countries, a Member may also be able to push for what is called a “Private Members Bill”. In such cases, a Member will draft the proposed law themselves (often in such cases, by drawing on CSO expertise for guidance) and use specific rules regarding Private Members Bills to get their draft law on to the legislative agenda. This approach is less commonly successful in countries with strong political parties, as it is usually only party-endorsed Bill, with many members in support, that are taken up by the whole House. That said, in specific cases, for example, on a people-focused issue such as WPS, Private Members Bills may have cross-party appeal and be accepted on that basis. For example, in the UK, a private members Bill was proposed in 2018 to address weaknesses in existing national legislation dealing with female genital mutilation.\(^35\) In the speech introducing the Bill, the initiator specifically referenced multiple UN resolutions on FGM, demonstrating the value of international commitments to encouraging domestic law reform. The advocacy and cross-party support of a Women’s Caucus can be particularly useful in support of Private Members Bills, as women from multiple political parties may still group together to drive forward specific WPS-focused legislation [see Chapter 9 below for more].

**Philippines Congress takes action to pass laws in support of WPS**

Philippine’s has produced two WPS National Action Plans, the first from 2010-16\(^36\) and the second from 2017-22.\(^37\) Both NAPs reference key laws as as the basis for further law reform efforts, including the Anti-Rape Act of 1997 (RA 8353), the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998 (RA 8505), the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (RA 9208) and the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004 (RA 9262). The NAPS recognise that these laws already contribute to the national legislative framework protecting women’s security.\(^38\)

Philippines has also passed two pieces of legislation which provide good practice models for consideration by other countries. Specifically, Republic Act 7192 (which is also known as the *Women in Development and Nation-building Law*\(^39\) “recognizes the role of women in nation building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men”. The Act legally requires:

**1.** A substantial portion of official development assistance funds received from foreign governments and multilateral agencies and organizations shall be set aside and utilized by the agencies concerned to support programs and activities for women;

**2.** All government departments shall ensure that women benefit equally and participate directly in the development programs and projects of said department, specifically those funded under official...

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foreign development assistance, to ensure the full participation and involvement of women in the
development process; and
(3) All government departments and agencies shall review and revise all their regulations, circulars,
issuances and procedures to remove gender bias therein.

In August 2009 the Philippines Congress enacted what is called the Magna Carta for Women (RA
9710), which promotes gender equality broadly, but also specifically provides for increased
participation of women in peace building processes and their protection from gender-based
violence in situations of armed conflicts. Specifically:

SEC. 29. Peace and Development. – The peace process shall be pursued with the following
considerations:
(a) Increase the number of women participating in discussions and decision-making in the peace
process, including membership in peace panels recognizing women's role in conflict prevention and
peace-making and in indigenous system of conflict resolution;
(b) Ensure the development and inclusion of women's welfare and concerns in the peace agenda in the
overall peace strategy and women's participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and
evaluation of rehabilitation and rebuilding of conflict-affected areas;
(c) The institution of measures to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict-affected communities
with special consideration for the specific needs of women and girls:
(d) Include the peace perspective in the education curriculum and other educational undertakings; and
(e) The recognition and support for women's role in conflict-prevention, management, resolution and
peacemaking, and in indigenous systems of conflict resolution.

SEC. 30. Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances. – For purposes of this Act, “Women in Especially
Difficult Circumstances” (WEDC) shall refer to victims and survivors of sexual and physical abuse, illegal
recruitment, prostitution, trafficking, armed conflict, women in detention, victims and survivors of rape
and incest, and such other related circumstances which have incapacitated them functionally. Local
government units are therefore mandated to deliver the necessary services and interventions to WEDC
under their respective jurisdictions.

SEC. 31. Services and Interventions. – WEDC shall be provided with services and interventions as
necessary such as, but not limited to, the following: (a) Temporary and protective custody; (b) Medical
and dental services; (c) Psychological evaluation; (d) Counseling; (e) Psychiatric evaluation; (f) Legal
services; (g) Productivity skills capability building; (h) Livelihood assistance; (i) Job placement; (j)
Financial assistance: and (k) Transportation assistance

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Law Reform

➢ Ideally, the development of a WPS NAP or other relevant sectoral plan will have been supported
by a legislative needs analysis. Where this has not been done:

- A systematic Gender and WPS Law Reform Assessment can be commissioned (eg. by
parliamentary staff, with support from the Attorney General’s Department, via an expert
NGO or legal consultant) to identify laws or amendments needed to promote the WPS
agenda;
- MPs can proactively engage with their constituents, NGOs, academics, national law
associations and other experts to identify themselves the most critical areas requiring law
reform action by parliament;

➢ Depending on the size and complexity of the law reforms identified, interested MPs or relevant
parliamentary committees may wish to formally discuss the results of any Gender and WPS Law
Reform Assessment to prioritise which law reforms should be progressed in what order. This
may result in the development of some form of legislative reform agenda, which could be used
to guide efforts of both the executive branch and parliament to draft and enact of laws;

➢ In support of an agreed set of law reform priorities, MPs and/or parliamentary committees can
- Officially request the executive branch to prioritise key law reforms;
- Raise a question about law reform during Question Time (see Chapter 7 for more);
- Proposing a motion on WPS issues to draw the attention of parliament and the government to a key concern (see Chapter 7 for more);
- Using the committee inquiry process as an opportunity to discuss a WPS issue in detail and propose specific legislative reforms in the form of committee recommendations (see Chapter 7 for more);
- Work with the parliamentary legal counsel or consultants to develop draft laws;

➢ In some countries, an individual MP or group of MPs may be able to develop and lobby for their own “Private Members Bill” on topics related to women, peace and security.

Question for Parliament:
✓ Has a systematic Gender and WPS Law Reform Assessment been undertaken (whether as part of a NAP development process, sectoral plan development process or by parliament itself) to identify key law reform priorities?
✓ Has an annual legislative plan been developed to guide parliament’s work, which takes into account key WPS law reform priorities?
✓ Do MPs and parliamentary committees have access to legal expertise to support their efforts to progress WPS-related law reforms?
6. Budgeting for WPS implementation

While it is vitally important that countries commit in law and policy to ensuring that women have agency and can live safe and peaceful lives, experience has shown that one of the most critical weaknesses in current efforts to implement the WPS agenda is a failure to allocate proper resources to implementing plans and programmes. The global NGO PeaceWomen has reported that of the 79 WPS National Action Plans that have been adopted around the world, only 34 actually included a budget. Of these, considerably less actually allocated the budget that was requested in the Plan.

The national budget is largely an act of parliament. In most countries, parliaments have constitutionally entrenched powers for debating and adopting the national budget. In some countries, they can even amend the it, though usually this power is limited to deleting items, and does not allow parliament to increase the budget. Parliament is also responsible for monitoring implementation of the annual state budget, often through a dedicated parliamentary budget and/or public accounts committee. The process of debating, approving and monitoring the budget is known as the “annual budget cycle”, and is often a constitutionally mandated duty of parliament.

Despite this, in many jurisdictions, parliaments play only a limited role in debating the budget, often simply accepting the budget proposed by the Government. Similarly, one of the most common parliamentary committees to exist throughout the world is a committee (or more than one) with a remit to review the proposed budget, as well as final expenditures; however, the impact of these committees has been very variable. If the WPS agenda is to be successfully implemented, parliamentary action, to ensure resources are applied most effectively to the most pressing WPS priorities, is absolutely essential.

Securing resources for WPS

Even where a WPS National Action Plan has been produced, one of the most common issues raised regarding implementation has been a failure to include a budget and/or to provide the resources requested in the budget. Unfortunately, very few WPS NAPs have attracted adequate funded in the National Budget, with development partners often being called upon to fill this gap. The lack of funding for WPS action is a critical issue that MPs can be proactive in addressing.

40 https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states
41 Parliament’s role with regard to the annual state budget is often considered as a cross-cutting issue. Thus, the law making function is exercised in the passage of the budget, while the monitoring of the budget’s implementation is oversight. Throughout the budget cycle, the engagement of the public is a form of representation.
43 Bill Woodley, Vinod Sahgal and Frederick Stapenhurst, above n 37; Joachim Wehner, above n 37.
Specifically, when the draft National Budget is tabled in the legislature, MPs can use their powers in plenary, and even more importantly, during the more detailed committee review process, to ask specific questions regarding whether and how WPS issues have been funded.

At a minimum, parliamentary review could include the committee responsible for reviewing public finances holding a hearing with representatives from the relevant ministry of department for women’s affairs. Officials would be asked whether and how they have budgeted to address priority WPS issue for the country. But such budget review could also involve holding hearings with a broader cross-section of relevant ministries, including for example, the ministries responsible for foreign affairs, the police force, military and security services, welfare, employment and/or peacebuilding. Each of these ministries could be asked about what funds they have allocated towards implementation of the WPS agenda.

Notably, it is important to review the budget holistically, and not just to focus on funds for the core women’s affairs ministry, because addressing women’s peace and security requires a cross-sectoral approach. Commonly, budgeting for WPS becomes simply a request for additional resources, but in many countries with a limited budget, this may not be possible. Nonetheless, parliament can still inquire whether existing budgets could be used more effectively, for example, by redirecting existing funds or using them more efficiently.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sri Lanka Public Finance Committee holds budget hearings on WPS</th>
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<td>The Sri Lankan Parliament recently adopted a series of reforms, which saw the Parliament establish strong parliamentary committees, with clear oversight mandates, for the first time in many years. These new committees cover a range of sectoral issues and include two committees focused on ensuring proper expenditure of government funds: the Committee on Public Finance (pre-expenditure reviews) and the Committee on Public Accounts (post-expenditure reviews).</td>
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<td>On 25 October 2018, the Public Finance Committee held a special hearing focused specifically on budgeting in support of implementation of the WPS agenda. A number of relevant ministries attended the hearing, specifically, the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Department of Police, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Administration, Management and Law &amp; Order and the Ministry of Finance and Mass Media. These bodies all have responsibilities for WPS issues under the Policy Framework and National Plan for Action to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka (2016-2020) and National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2017-2021). The Chair inquired on a wide range of relevant issues, including for example, funding allocations for shelters for women fleeing violence, the provision of psycho-social support to victims of violence, the involvement of the Department of Police in the process of increasing women’s access to justice, the involvement of the State media in promoting awareness of services for women suffering from violence, activities taken to address sexual harassment.</td>
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**Ensuring WPS budgets are effectively used**

Even where an adequate budget is allocated towards gender equality and/or women’s peace and security, it is also critical for parliament to assess whether such funds were actually received by the relevant government department and expended in an efficient and impactful way. In many countries, officials complain of money being budgeted but not actually allocated in practice. This is a major problem and one that MPs can address by using their oversight powers to track actual disbursements by the Government.
Most countries have a parliamentary committee specifically dedicated to reviewing budget expenditures at the end of the budget cycle, commonly called a Public Accounts Committee. Such a committee usually has strong powers to hold hearings with government departments and undertake a thorough review of what government funds were used for and whether such expenditures actually had a positive impact. Such a review should look both at value-for-money but also the actual results for ordinary people on the ground, in particular the most marginalised and needy in the community.

In practice, many such finance committees draw on information and analyses already produced by the national Supreme Audit Institution, and some even call on the audit office for advice in dissecting the specific technicalities of budget and expenditure reports and the impact of public spending.

Members of the expenditure review committee have a particularly powerful role, but other MPs can also play a role in budget oversight, by engaging with their own constituents to find out whether the services promised by the Government were actually delivered. For example, were survivors of violence able to access police and welfare services? Were shelters for women operational and accessible? Were livelihoods opportunities for war widows or female headed households actually made available? Were pensions for war widows actually paid out to the right people?

### Using parliamentary committees to assess the gender and WPS impacts of budgets

For many years, countries have been encouraged to implement “gender responsive budgets”, but limited resources within both the executive and legislative branches has often hampered the ability to undertake a proper gender analysis of whether and how the budget promotes gender equality. Nonetheless, some countries have forged ahead. In Bangladesh for example, gender issues are integrated into the Medium-Term Budget Framework, which requires ministries to clearly link their objectives back to the advancement of women’s rights, including WPS. Their annual budgets must then also identify how gender equality is being promoted. A gender budget analysis of all ministries is then done by Ministry of Finance and submitted to the Parliament during each Budget session. The Government has presented a gender budget since the 2009-10 financial year, and now applies across 43 ministries/divisions.

In Namibia, UNDP has worked with the Parliament to provide training to MPs on gender responsive budgets to assist MPs to more effectively review proposed budget and final budget expenditures. This work with MPs progresses the commitments in Namibia’s National Gender Policy 2010-2020 and the National GRB Guidelines, whereby MPs are in charge of overseeing the application of GRB principles in the national budget in accordance with 2014 Cabinet Decision.

In Canada, the Government produces a Gender Budget Statement which provides a gender-based analysis of the budget, identifying how policies may affect women differently than men. Additionally, committees have used the budget review process to examine gender and WPS issues. In 2018, two House of Commons Standing Committees, Foreign Affairs and International Development, and National Defence, joined together to examine the spending of governmental departments responsible for the implementation of the WPS agenda. MPs questioned the Minister of National Defence on the recruitment of women, its commitments to peace operations,

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and its policies on the elimination of harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour within the military.⁴⁷

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: WPS and the budget cycle

➢ MPs can engage with their own constituents to gather information on whether and how government programmes have actually been useful in progressing the WPS agenda. This information can be used to inform parliamentary questions and hearings on the budget;

➢ When the draft National Budget is tabled in the legislature, MPs can use Question Time to ask specific questions regarding whether and how WPS issues will be funded;

➢ Committees responsible for reviewing both budgets can commission the parliamentary secretariat to undertake a detailed, holistic analysis of the budget to identify how existing budgets could be targeted more effectively towards addressing WPS issues, for example, by redirecting existing funds or using them more efficiently;

➢ Committees responsible for reviewing public finances can hold a hearing with representatives from relevant ministries, including the ministry for women, but also ministries responsible for foreign affairs, the police force, military and security services, welfare, employment and/or peacebuilding. Each of these ministries could be asked about what funds they have allocated towards implementation of the WPS agenda and whether/how they have set performance indicators to assess the impact of such funds;

➢ Committees responsible for reviewing budget expenditures at the end of the budget cycle, can also hold hearings with government departments to review what government funds were actually expended and whether such expenditures actually had a positive impact. Such a review should look both at value-for-money but also the actual results for ordinary people on the ground;

➢ Committee which interact with the national Supreme Audit Institution can examine relevant reports (e.g. audit reports examining national security institutions, peacekeeping contributions, gender institutions or local governments) to focus attention on WPS implementation specifically. As appropriate, committees may wish to consider recommending that the SAI integrate some form of gender audit into their work, and/or undertaken performance audits which include gender equality/WPS issues as part of their assessment framework.

Question for Parliament:

✓ Have MPs or parliamentary staff received training on gender responsive budgeting, and specifically GRB in support for women’s peace and security?

✓ Does the country and/or the legislature implement gender responsive budgeting? In any case, is a gender analysis (including WPS impacts) of the budget produced for MPs to inform their work throughout the budget cycle?

✓ Have any parliamentary committee/s responsible for reviewing the proposed national budget held a hearing specifically examining budget allocations to implement national gender equality and WPS priorities?

✓ Have any parliamentary committee/s responsible for reviewing budget expenditures held a hearing or asked specific questions of ministries to assess whether budget allocations to implement national gender equality and WPS priorities (i) were provided as budgeted (ii) were

⁴⁷ Ibid.
expended efficiently and (iii) were expended impactfully, to improve the lives of women and girls, in particular, the most vulnerable and marginalised?
7. Oversight of WPS implementation

One of the most powerful mandates that legislatures have is the ability to oversee the activities of the Government. These powers are variously described as “oversight”, “control” and “monitoring” in different jurisdictions. Oversight can be done by all MPs, for example, through asking questions or making interpellations, or by debating resolutions to provide guidance to the Government (see later sections for more).

However, it is particularly the role of parliamentary committees, which have a specific mandate and powers to review the work of Government bodies and/or issues of public interest. Committees are known as the “workhorses” of parliament, because they are responsible for undertaking the longer-term, more detailed reviews of government policies and programmes. Committee inquiries can be a particularly effective monitoring mechanism, because they allow MPs to call witnesses, demand and review government documents, organise public hearings, and debate in greater depth the issues involved in addressing a particular policy problem. They also enable committees to involve the public in their work, not only by holding their hearings in public but also by inviting written or oral submissions from any member of the community. At the end of an inquiry, the committee will table a report in the House for debate and specific consideration by the Government. The process of producing and debating committee reports offers can be an excellent opportunity for MPs to participate in national policy-making, by making recommendations for concrete action to be taken by the Government.

Committee oversight of specific WPS NAP

Where a WPS National Action Plan has been developed, parliamentary committees can play a key role in overseeing government implementation. Very often, WPS NAPs include an annual reporting mechanism, with reports produced by the lead Ministry to track progress. In some countries, these are also shared with the legislature. For example, in Finland, the WPS NAP requires that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs prepares an annual report to the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament on implementation of NAP.48 In France, the first iteration of the WPS NAP (2010-13) required annual WPS NAP reports to be presented to the relevant parliamentary committees, but in the second WPS NAP (2014-16), this was reduced to a final report on WPS NAP implementation.49 In Australia, three progress reports have been tabled to the Federal Parliament, with a report submitted every two years for the WPS NAP (2012-18).50 Germany’s most recent NAP (2017-20) also requires a report on the outcomes of the WPS NAP to be presented to the Bundestag (Parliament) at the end of the Plan.51

Most commonly, WPS National Action Plan implementation is reviewed by a foreign affairs or international relations committee, in recognition of the fact that the WPS agenda is set out in multiple UN Security Council Resolutions. (As described in the next paragraph however, other committees are increasingly being involved in this WPS NAP oversight.) As their names suggest, these committees are usually mandated to review any issues relevant to foreign affairs or international relations, including treaty implementation and the SDGs (see Chapter 4 above for more), as well as UN resolutions.


agendas and activities. They also have the power to review the policies and programmes of foreign affairs ministries, who are commonly involved in WPS programmes, in particular in relation to deploying officials to support peace operations and/or peace agreement negotiations and in coordinating elements of peacekeeping, in particular polices relating to overseas implementation of the WPS agenda. These committees also often send their members to participate in international conferences and meetings, including in relation to gender, CEDAW and/or the WPS agenda.

In addition, it is increasingly common for parliaments to set up a dedicated committee focused on gender equality. This is an observable trend, as more countries develop dedicated gender equality action plans or WPS national action plans that require oversight and recognise the need for all arms of government to prioritise SDG-5: Gender Equality and the well-being of 50% of their population. An existing gender equality and women’s affairs committee will clearly have a role to play in providing oversight over the WPS agenda. Such a committee will often undertake joint hearings so that Members can share their gender expertise, while harnessing the sectoral expertise of other committees. It would be good practice, for example, for a review of implementation of the WPS agenda to be undertaken jointly by a foreign affairs committee and a gender equality committee.

Groundbreaking report on women, peace and security from Canadian Foreign Affairs & International Development Committee

The Canadian Federal Parliament has been one of the most active proponents of the women, peace and security agenda in the world. Most notably, in September 2016, the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development studied the women, peace and security agenda, and Canada’s role in supporting its implementation, both through its own national contributions to peace operations and through its development assistance. It launched its final report, An Opportunity for Global Leadership: Canada And the Women, Peace And Security Agenda, in October 2016, following an open process of oral and written submissions. Witnesses involved in the committee review reflected a broad range of perspectives, including the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, UNDP and UN Women, Global Affairs Canada, and a range of NGOs, academics and practitioners.

Subsequently, the Standing Committee then released two complementary reports. The first was published in October 2016 and focused on Development Cooperation for a More Stable, Inclusive and Prosperous World: A Collective Ambition. Notably, the second, released in November 2016, specifically looked at the WPS agenda, with an overview report on Supporting Peace and Development in Guatemala and Colombia for the Long-Term, but an additional report produced as a case study, Guatemala and Colombia - Women, Peace and Security and Countries of Focus for Bilateral Developmental Assistance.

Committee oversight on specific WPS sectoral issues

While committees dealing with foreign affairs or international development have clear mandates to deal with UNSCR 1325 and related WPS resolutions and activities, nonetheless, many other committees have a related mandate. Ensuring women’s peace and security is a cross-cutting issue that

52 As part of the global efforts to track implementation of the SDGs, IPU is now keeping track of relevant parliamentary committees working on gender equality and women’s rights in support of SDG 16.7.1a reporting: see http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/Instancelist.asp
56 https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/FAAE/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=9225021
may require action across a number of sectors, including the military, police force, human rights, education, economic and livelihoods development, religious affairs and peacebuilding. In many parliaments, these sectors will be dealt with by different parliamentary committees, meaning that each has a right to inquire into aspects of the WPS agenda that relate to their mandate. For example:

- **SDGs committee**: More parliaments are beginning to establish a dedicated SDGs committee, as they begin to implement the SDGs and want to ensure they track their progress more effectively. Such committees can assess WPS as part of the review of implementation of SDG-5 on gender equality, SDG-8 on economic development and SDG 16 on peace, justice and inclusion;

- **Justice/law and order/police committee**: It is common for parliaments to have some form of committee dedicated to oversight of domestic law enforcement and justice agencies. These agencies have a clear mandate for implementing domestic aspects of the WPS agenda, such that it is important for parliament to oversee their effectiveness in ensuring access to justice for victims of violence, but also by promoting the engendering of such institutions (e.g. by reviewing efforts by such agencies to recruit and promote more women officers or to provide gender-sensitivity training to all of their staff);

- **Armed forces/defence/security services committee**: Many parliaments have a separate committee dedicated to oversights of the military and national security agencies (working domestically or abroad), to reflect the reality that the role of such bodies is of a different nature to domestic law enforcement agencies. Such committees can examine military and civilian peacekeeping activities, as well as the gendered impact of any domestic military operations;

- **National security committee**: In addition to committees focused on security sector institutions, some parliaments also have committees mandated to review national security processes and/or thematic priorities. Such committees can also review WPS issues as they relate to the security sector. Notably, such committees are also increasingly being mandated to examine national efforts focused on the prevention of violent extremism (PVE). Such powers can be used to examine the gender-specific aspects of both violent extremism and prevention efforts;

- **Peacebuilding/reconciliation committee**: Where countries are recovering from violent conflict, it is common for the Government to develop a specific peacebuilding plan and peacebuilding programmes. Accordingly, it is common for parliament to create a peacebuilding or reconciliation committee, specifically mandated with overseeing implementation of such policies and activities. Such committees have a clear role in overseeing implementation of the WPS agenda, including reviewing the specific impact of peacebuilding efforts on women and girls;

- **Economic development/employment/livelihoods committee**: Many parliaments have set up one or more committees mandated to review Government economic and employment policies. A key aspect of the WPS agenda is ensuring that women affected by violence are included in recovery efforts, including efforts to rebuild their economic security in the aftermath of conflict. Such committees can review Government programmes to assess whether they are gender sensitive and include specific components to address the special economic needs of women affected by conflict;

- **Social welfare committee**: In some countries, the WPS agenda has included support to women affected by violence through pensions or other welfare payments or programmes. Committees with a welfare focus can examine the impact and effectiveness of such programmes, in particular whether beneficiaries are receiving the rightful entitlements;

Any of these parliamentary committees can initiate an inquiry on a topic within their mandate. In fact, the terms of reference of most committees enable them to initiate hearings into “any matter related
to the mandate of the committee”. Alternatively, parliament may also pass a resolution in plenary specifically tasking one or more of the existing committees to undertake an inquiry into an issue, for example, into SGBV implementation, welfare and employment benefits for war widows or peacekeeping deployments in specific countries. Where an inquiry is of sufficient public interest to warrant its own dedicated resources, parliament may also choose to establish an ad hoc or special committee, which will disband upon completion of its work.

**Question Time / Interpellations**

In many countries, there are various processes that can be used by MPs to push for action, where the Government or the ruling parliamentary party has not have prioritised key issues or reforms. Such processes can be very useful to draw attention to key WPS issues. They can also be particularly useful, where a country actually has a WPS National Action Plan, to provide oversight on progress with implementation and draw attention to cases where implementation may be lagging.

One of the most common forms of oversight action that can be used by individual MPs is to ask a question of the Government. Depending on the type of parliamentary system that exists in a country, this can be done via a question asked during Question Time or as a written interpellation:

- **Question Time:** Many countries have a process available, whereby a regular time is allotted during the plenary parliamentary session for individual MPs to ask questions of Ministers (this is in addition to the opportunity to use parliamentary committees to hold longer hearings with Ministers). Such questions are intended to enable MPs to inquire into what the Government is or is not doing in relation to a particular topic or programme. Such questions could be used by MPs to ask about WPS implementation, and to draw specific Government attention towards key law reforms (as well as other WPS priorities);

- **Interpellations:** In countries where the system of Government means that Ministers do not sit within the Parliament, Question Time may be replaced or complemented by interpellations. Such interpellations enable an individual MP to ask a question in writing of a Minister and receive a response. Interpellations can be a very useful way of accessing detailed information on what the Government is or is not doing to implement the WPS agenda, in particular, because more detailed data can be provided in a written ministerial response;

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**Parliamentary questions can be useful to draw attention to WPS issues**

The Norwegian Storting (Parliament) has been active in supporting the WPS agenda, not only as a legislature but through individual MPs. A number of Members have used their powers to ask questions and make interpellations to draw attention to WPS issues. For example, during Question Time in January 2016 MP Hon Olaug Bollestad asked the Minister of Defence: “To strengthen the recruitment of girls in the Armed Forces, and what is done specifically to safeguard the girls coming in, so that they are appreciated and shown respect and so there are attitude changes". In March 2015, MP Hon Kjell-Ingolf Ropstad submitted a question in writing to the Minister of Defence, which asked (in summary): “It is a goal that the proportion of women earning first-time service increases over the next few years. What signal does the government believe it sends to women that the Armed Forces do not invest in material and logistics to get them geared in line with men and what will she do to ensure that this will take place [immediately]”. In November 2010, MP Hon Ine Eriksen

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57 [https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Sporretimesporsmal/et-sporretimesporsmal/?qid=64403](https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Sporretimesporsmal/et-sporretimesporsmal/?qid=64403)

58 [https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Skriftlige-sporsmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporsmal/?qid=62239](https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Skriftlige-sporsmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporsmal/?qid=62239)
Søreide submitted an interpellation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs asking quite specifically: “What has Norway done to contribute to the implementation of UN1325?”.59

A number of interesting examples were also collected in the latest NATO Parliamentary Assembly’s report on parliamentary implementation of the WPS agenda. For instance, “in May 2018, German parliamentarians questioned the Federal Government on sexual violence in international missions a few months after OXFAM staff members were found to have sexually exploited victims of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Similarly, the Turkish Parliament asked for updates from the Government regarding the constantly evolving situation of women displaced and affected by the Syrian conflict.”60

**Parliamentary Motions / Resolutions**

Many countries allow individual MPs to propose “motions” or “resolutions” to the plenary, which serve as an opportunity to call for action on a particular issue. Such motions cannot usually force a Government to do something, but they are useful to enable the plenary to draw attention to a particular topic and to put pressure on the Government to take action. They also generate public debate and can be useful to draw media attention to a critical issue, such as WPS.

**Using parliamentary processes to focus Government attention on WPS issues**

In countries with strong political parties, it can be difficult for MPs to push for action outside the party system. Nonetheless, parliamentary processes exist which can be utilised by individual MPs, whether they sit as independents or simply want to take action on their own because an issue is important to them. For example, in Portugal, Members have used parliamentary resolutions to draw attention to WPS they want the Government to act on. For example, in 2017 and then 2018, Members of the Portuguese National Assembly passed two resolutions calling on the Government to (i) adopt measures to address discrimination against women in the Security Forces and to implement education campaigns to combat discrimination; (ii) promoting women’s working conditions in the Security Forces, including investing in facilities and equipment that is gender-appropriate; and (iii) provide guidelines for maternity rights for women in the Security Forces.61

Most recently, in Sierra Leone MPs participated in a “WPS Workshop for Parliamentarians” supported by UNDP in July 2018, which produced an Outcomes Statement capturing MPs’ discussions and identifying both priorities for Parliament and recommendations for action by the Government. The Chair of the Sierra Leone Women’s Caucus subsequently worked with the Clerk of Parliament (with UNDP support) to develop those outcomes into a Parliamentary Resolution. The resolution on WPS was tabled in early February 2019 and debated in the House. MPs from different parties spoke on the Resolution, with many male MPs using the opportunity to show their support. The debate covered critical issues such as amendment to the Chieftaincy Act and to ensure land, property and succession rights for women. At the end of the debate, the resolution was formally adopted by Parliament. The resolution now commits Parliament to do a host of things, including moving forward with an affirmative action bill to promote women in decision-making.

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59 Question: [https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/2010-2011/110118/#a2](https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/2010-2011/110118/#a2); Debate: [https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Interpellasjoner/Interpellasjon/?qid=48428](https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Interpellasjoner/Interpellasjon/?qid=48428)


Subsequently, in late February, the Parliament held a one-day workshop on the new Sierra Leone WPS National Action Plan (SILNAP). The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs was invited to share information on the new SILNAP II, and MPs then worked together to discuss and identify which items in the SILNAP II would be prioritised for parliamentary support. This parliamentary WPS action plan will be used to guide further work.

**Independent oversight bodies reporting to parliament**

In addition to internal parliamentary processes whereby Members themselves undertake oversight activities, some countries have created independent bodies which have a mandate to undertake such monitoring activities. Most commonly, such bodies are set up as independent statutory authorities, with their mandates established by legislation. These bodies may then report annually to the legislature, with their reports tabled in the plenary. Sometimes these reports are then sent to a relevant parliamentary committee for further review and debate.

Examples of such bodies are quite diverse. Many countries use some form of Ombudsman, for example a Police Ombudsman or Military Ombudsman, who might be responsible for investigating complaints about improper conduct in the security services, including in relation to the handling of women’s complaints or repeated problems with gender-sensitivity within the services. In other countries, such independent monitoring may be done by a National Human Rights Commission or Gender Commission, which will have an overarching mandate to examine complaints in relation to gender equality and women’s rights, including the failure of the Government to properly implement specific elements of the women, peace and security agenda. Notably, most legislation requires these bodies to report to the legislature, which will provide a critical opportunity for MPs to use such reports to initiate a discussion on the issue raised, drawing attention as necessary to actions that need to be taken to fully implement the WPS agenda. Even where such bodies are not obligated by law to report to the legislature, parliaments can still develop cooperative relationships to facilitate information and report sharing and ensure that MPs can still use such reports to inform their own work.

**Germany Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces**

In Germany, the Bundestag (Parliament) actually appoints a specific Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, who is responsible for oversight of the Bundeswehr (armed forces). The Commissioner is elected by the Members of the Bundestag in a secret ballot for a 5-year term of office. He/she is not a Member of Parliament nor a civil servant. The Commissioner’s mandate and powers are set out in the Act on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. His/her overarching role is “to safeguard basic rights and to assist the Bundestag in exercising parliamentary oversight” over the armed forces, a task enshrined in the national constitution.

The Parliamentary Commissioner produces an annual report which is tabled in Parliament for its consideration. Its reports include a specific section on women in the armed forces. This section provides specific reflections on implementation of the Act on Equal Opportunities for Female and Male Personnel of the Bundeswehr, which parliament passed to require at least 15% of the Bundeswehr to be female. Notably though, the Parliamentary Commissioner does not report on armed personnel deployed overseas.

A separate report on implementation of the German WPS National Action Plan is required to be submitted to the Bundestag at the of implementation of the next phase of the WPS NAP in 2020. Interestingly, the 2017-2020 German NAP calls on the Government to actively implement WPS-related legislation already passed by the Bundestag, namely the Federal Act on Gender Equality, the Appointment to Federal Bodies Act and the Act on Equal Opportunities for Female and Male Military
Personnel of the Bundeswehr in the selection, promotion and advancement of employees of Federal Ministries. In the context of the WPS agenda, these laws require the Government to proactively “Implement gender-equitable personnel development in foreign, development, security and defence policy”.

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Oversight

- MPs can engage with their own constituents to gather information on whether and how government programmes have actually been useful in progressing the WPS agenda. This information can be used to inform parliamentary questions and hearings;
- Where a WPS NAP has been produced, one or more parliamentary committees can hold regular hearings to assess progress with implementation and provide recommendations accordingly;
- Where WPS priorities are included in a national development plan and/or different sectoral plans, relevant parliamentary committees can hold their own or joint hearings to assess progress with implementation and provide recommendations accordingly;
- MPs can use Question Time, interpellations or parliamentary motions to draw the attention of Ministers and the whole House to specific WPS issues;
- MPs and/or parliamentary committees can use the tabling of reports by independent oversight institutions (e.g. national human rights institution, Police Ombudsman, Supreme Audit Institution) to draw attention to WPS issues. Parliamentary hearings can be held to examine the specific of such reports and/or questions asked of Ministers.

Question for Parliament:

- Does your parliament have a foreign affairs/international relations committee, gender equality committee or other relevant committee with an interest in undertaking, on their own or jointly: (i) a regular review of progress with implementing the WPS National Action Plan if one exists; or (ii) an overarching review of national implementation of the WPS agenda?
- Has a review been undertaken by the parliamentary secretariat to inform parliamentary sectoral committees on whether and how they could use their committee mandates and powers to progress issues-based inquiries on key WPS issues?
- Is Question Time or other forms of individual MP inquiry being effectively used to ask Ministers questions regarding implementation of WPS priorities?
- Are there any WPS issues that would benefit from Members proposing a resolution to the House for debate and endorsement?

8. Representation

Representation & outreach: Members of parliament are elected by the citizens of a country, to represent their interests in the political decision-making. This representational role in practice means that MPs should constantly be engaging in a two-way feedback loop, sharing the activities of parliament with their constituents and collecting information from them to take back to parliament to inform their work. In order for a parliament to maintain its legitimacy, it is critical that citizens are provided with meaningful opportunities to provide feedback and input into the work of the MPs and parliament on what matters to them, including in relation to promoting the WPS agenda.

Parliamentarians as representatives

In almost all countries, parliamentarians are elected by members of the public to sit in the legislature as representatives of the public interest. In some countries, MPs are elected directly from a geographical constituency, in others, they may represent a section of the public (e.g. Members elected to represent a particular demographic (e.g. youth, women), sector (e.g. unions, military) or ethnicity). Regardless, their job is sit in the legislature to make decisions on behalf of all members of the community – not just those who vote for them.

To effectively represent the public’s interest, good practice from around the world has shown that it is important for individual Members to develop and maintain channels of communication to enable a two-way feedback loop between the public and their Member. In the modern age, many MPs now have a web page which allows the public to send in their feedback or requests for assistance, as well as social media accounts on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. These can be used both to share information about what a parliamentarian is doing, but also to collect feedback from the community on what they believe the most pressing issues facing the community or country are, and how they want their MP to take action.

In the context of supporting the WPS agenda, effective representation means that parliamentarians should proactively reach out to women and men, young and old, to find out what issues are most impacting women’s peace and security. In addition to technology-based communication mechanisms, experience from around the world highlights two common approaches to MP outreach:

➢ Local Public Forums: Either within a constituency or a local community, a parliamentarian can organize public forums, either formal or informal, in which citizens have an opportunity to provide feedback on WPS issues, whether on specific topics (e.g. SGBV, the impact of conflict on war widows or female headed households, economic development needs of women in the aftermath of conflict) or a more general discussion on WPS implementation by key Government institutions;

➢ Public Consultations: Parliamentary committees should also be engaging civil society and the general public as they consider draft laws and conduct inquiries. Such consultations can range from the informal (i.e. public forums; reporting sessions) to the more formal (i.e. public hearings); and from the technical (i.e. surveys) to the simple (i.e. request for submissions via SMS). It can also include virtual engagement, including online feedback, surveys and social media.

When reaching out to communities to engage them in the WPS agenda, parliamentarians are encouraged to partner with civil society organisations, who often have strong community networks,

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convening power and/or gender expertise that can be harnessed by MPs to assist them in organising public forums and consultations that peacefully engage in outreach that results in discussions that actually feedback into parliamentary work.

Kyrgyzstan was a pilot country for UNDP’s “Global Project on the Role of Parliaments as Partners in Women, Peace and Security (2018-19)”. Kyrgyzstan has developed three WPS NAPs since 2013, with the latest NAP running from 2018 to 2020. The Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) was not included in the WPS NAP however, in recognition of its autonomy as a separate branch of government. To support Parliament to identify its own WPS NAP priorities, UNDP worked with Parliament and a local NGO, Innovative Solutions Inc, to organize a meeting on WPS in November 2018, which brought together MPs with government officials and civil society to agree on a Parliamentary WPS Action Plan.

During discussions, MPs and other stakeholders identified the lack of awareness and understanding of the WPS agenda among state actors at the national and local level as a key challenge. To address this, it was agreed to conduct Regional WPS Forums in all seven provinces of the country to inform local level stakeholders and wider CSOs networks about the WPS agenda and the priorities specifically identified for Kyrgyzstan, as well as to collect the information from the field on local issues and priorities that could inform the WPS Roadmap for the Parliament. These Regional Forums were organized with support from provincial administrations and local CSO partners, which resulted in good attendance. Participants came from state agencies, local councils, law enforcement bodies, religious bodies, NGOs, women’s organization and media. The Forums also had excellent coverage in the national and local media, which was an awareness-raising outcome as well.

During each of the Regional Forums, MPs informed participants about the country’s obligations in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and the Government’s own adoption of the WPS NAP (2018-2020). Parliamentarians also informed participants about laws and amendments that have been considered and/or adopted by the Jogorku Kenesh in support of the WPS agenda, including the Law “On Mediation” and amendments to the Criminal Code, Administrative Procedures Code, Code of Offenses, Code of Violations and Law “On Administrative Procedures”.

During discussions, participants raised a variety of WPS issues on the ground, including:

- Improving inter-agency coordination and information and cooperation amongst relevant authorities and services in the field of protection and defense against violence;
- Ensuring better financing of the WPS activities at the local level;
- Developing comprehensive work plans for the implementation of the WPS agenda at the local level and the inclusion of representatives of civil society in these processes;
- Addressing specific conflict and security issues in border areas, which also have social and economic consequences;
- Introducing of standards of services provision and activities to counteract violence/conflict;
- Strengthening the solidarity of the women’s movement and CSO-Government collaboration on peacebuilding and security sector reform;
- Harnessing the existing capacity of local communities to improve support to vulnerable groups and to contribute to early warning efforts;
- Raising awareness of the WPS Security agenda amongst implementers of UNSCR 1325, in particular law enforcement bodies and the courts but also local communities.

The Forums served a dialogue platform to discuss the localization of the WPS agenda, based on the context, challenges, and opportunities of each region. They gathered important insights for MPs and the support team of officials and civil society members on priority issues for WPS implementation.
Parliamentarians as gender-sensitive peacebuilders

In addition to their work as representatives, parliamentarians, whether male or female, have a critical role to play as active peacebuilders. It is an unfortunate reality that leaders within society – including parliamentarians – can often play a damaging role in inciting violence amongst their followers. Conversely however, parliamentarians can also demonstrate leadership in peacebuilding, by using the role as a community representative to engage in dialogue, consensus-building and peace-making activities. This was recognised by UNDP more than a decade ago, in the 2006 publication on *Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery: Guidelines for the International Community*.64

At a very minimum, in times of crisis, there is a duty on male and female parliamentarians alike to take care that their engagement with the community does not inflame tensions and/or contribute to partisan violence. As leaders, the statements made by MPs can have a huge impact on public sentiment, such that parliamentarians are encouraged to use language that promotes moderation, reduces tensions and encourages peaceful resolution of conflict. In this context, MPs can also actively encourage their followers to be respectful of human rights, including the rights of women to live securely and peacefully.

More proactively, parliamentarians can also undertake activities aimed at actively building peace amongst communities and calling on community members to respect both human rights broadly and women’s rights specifically. MPs can hold local forums, which aim to bring together parties to (potential) conflict to discuss their issues and find negotiated, peaceful solutions. MPs should proactively ensure that both men and women are included in such forums, recognising the role that women often play at community level in building consensus and managing conflict. In some cases, it might be safer to engage with men and women separately as well and/or to engage young women and men separately to ensure that their voices and concerns are heard as well. In the aftermath of conflict, parliamentarians can also promote reconciliation amongst warring groups, by engaging community members, including women and girls, to better understand the harm suffered during the conflict and start developing strategies (both parliamentary and otherwise) to address such harm.

### Developing the capacities of MPs to engage as effective peacebuilders in Somalia

Over the last couple of decades, there has been much greater recognition of the role that MPs can play in promoting peace as active peacebuilders. In 2005, the World Bank published a report on *Parliaments as Peacebuilders: The Role of Parliaments in Conflict-Affected Countries*65 and in 2006, UNDP published *Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery: Guidelines for the International Community*.66 These guidelines recognised that MPs can be incredibly useful in facilitating dialogue between different community groups in order to ease tensions and build consensus.

In order to strengthen the positive contribution that MPs can make in conflict-affected contexts, including by promoting gender-sensitive approaches to peace-making and peace-building, there has been increasing attention paid to proactively building the capacities of MPs to support mediation and dialogue. For example, in 2014, the IGAD Office of the Facilitator for Somalia Peace and National Reconciliation in collaboration with the Federal Parliament of Somalia organized a 5-day capacity-building training for Federal Members of Parliament attended by 27 MPs, including 6 female parliamentarians. The workshop provided general leadership skills training, as well as

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65[https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6532](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/6532)
specific peacebuilding topics (e.g. types of conflict, sources of conflict, key principles of conflict resolution and peace building, conflict analysis, mediation/conflict resolution skills, community peacebuilding methods and strategic communication. Reports of the training indicate that it was positively welcomed by MPs, who appreciate being engage in active simulations designed to reflect the context of the culture and the current conflict situation facing Somalia. Participants expressed their interest in participating in the ongoing stabilization and peacebuilding processes underway in Somalia by putting in practice what they earned during the training.67

**Parliamentarians as partners**

While MPs are seen to be elected for their individual leadership capabilities, in practice, parliamentarians most commonly operate as partners in pursuit of common public interests. Most commonly, parliamentarians come together through political parties, but it is also very common that MPs work very closely with local community groups and civil society organisations, including trade unions, business groups and NGOs. In the context of the WPS agenda, partnerships between MPs and civil society groups with expertise in women’s rights, peacebuilding and security reform can be very fruitful, as they enable MPs to effectively access subject matter expertise and networks.

Global experience has shown that parliamentary committees on gender equality and/or women’s rights (see Part 7 above) and Women’s Caucuses (see Part 10 below) have often worked closely with women’s rights NGOs, with both groups sharing similar objectives. Committees such as foreign affairs, human rights, welfare and even security also often draw on the expertise of NGOs, who very often have specialised expertise in areas such as human rights, women’s rights, security sector reform and peacebuilding. Such partnerships can bring benefits to both partners, with MPs able to draw on technical advice, research skills and community trust amongst beneficiary groups, and NGOs able to harness MPs official convening power, as well as to more effectively channel their advocacy towards achieving law reform or programming outcomes.

In the area of human rights, women’s rights and the WPS agenda specifically, NGOs have also been particularly active in producing their own “Shadow Reports”, to provide a community-based perspective on national implementation issues. Where Governments produce a WPS NAP monitoring report or annual report, NGOs may offer up a Shadow Report, which presents their own analysis of whether and to what extent the Government has been meeting its international and national commitments. These Shadow Reports are commonly shared with international UN bodies, but can also be a very useful source of information for MPs and parliamentary committees, seeking to cross-check the Government’s own data.

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Parliaments-CSO partnerships support better coordination and outcomes

In the Ukraine, the Equal Opportunities Inter-Faction Union initiated the creation of a Public Council on Gender that aimed to coordinate the efforts of MPs, civil society and international organizations to promote and advance gender equality. The Council’s main objective is to introduce a coordination and knowledge management platform to ensure information flow and cooperation on gender issues between key stakeholders in the country. Significantly, the council has six permanent thematic groups, one of which is specifically focused on security and peace-building, with a mandate to monitor implementation of the UNSCR 1325 NAP and to support women’s participation in peace-building.68

In the Pacific, the Regional Rights and Resources Team (RRRT), a unit working within the Secretariat for the Pacific Community that began its life as a development project, has long been working with a cross-section of stakeholders, including MPs and NGOs to promote women’s rights through law reform. In particular, RRRT partnered with the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement, a leading Fiji NGO, to produce the region’s first Legislative Lobbying Toolkit,69 which was developed specifically with the aim of strengthening partnerships between MPs and NGOs in order to promote gender-sensitive legislation. This work dovetailed with RRRT’s annual Regional Human Rights Meeting for Pacific MPs, which also sought to build MPs understanding of critical human rights issues, including around topics such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325. Over time, RRRT’s collaborations multi-stakeholder collaborations have borne fruit, with 11 parliaments in the region enacting specific domestic and family protection legislation over the last decade or so,70 in large part due to RRRT’s collaborative campaign to work with local CSO and MPs to move forward critical law reforms.

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: Effective Representation

➢ MPs can reach proactively reach out to women and men, young and old, to find out what issues are most impacting women’s peace and security. In addition to technology-based communication mechanisms, MPs could organise local public forums, either within a constituency or a local community, or more official public consultations on draft laws and/or relevant WPS topics through parliamentary committees;

➢ MPs and parliamentary staff can develop their own skills as proactive peacebuilding. MPs can participate in mediation and conflict sensitivity training71 and use such skills to engage in peacebuilding process ranging from local level mediation of disputes in their constituencies to high level, formal peace talks;

➢ MPs can develop partnerships with civil society and NGOs, whether formal or informal, which enable MPs to draw on the expertise and experience of such groups to inform their own efforts to promote WPS issues. NGO and academics can undertake research and/or analysis on particular topics and/or help to convene community level meetings;

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71 For example, the not-for-profit Folke Bernadotte Akademie runs training online and in-person courses on conflict and mediation issues that MPs and their staff could apply for: see <https://fba.se/en/how-we-work/courses/upcoming-courses/>. 
MPs can work more closely with the media to raise awareness amongst the community more broadly regarding WPS issues and any work that parliament is doing to address these issues.

**Question for Parliament:**

- Do parliamentarians currently engage in regular local forums or public consultations, either with the general community or specific groups (e.g. women, youth)? If so, have any such forums or consultations been organised to discuss WPS issues?

- Does Parliament have a Public Outreach Unit or communications staff that can support parliamentarians to engage more effectively with their constituents, in particular, in order to engage in 2-way communication with the public on WPS issues?

- Have parliamentarians received any peacebuilding training, eg. to develop their conflict analysis, mediation, dialogue or consensus-building skills?

- Do parliamentarians proactively work with groups or communities at risk of conflict, in order to build trust and mitigate potential conflicts? Are parliamentarians aware of the civil society organizations that work on women peace and security in their constituency? Do they meet with CSOs regularly?
9. Role of parliamentary groups

While parliamentarians are usually elected to represent some geographic or demographic of voter, in reality, it is common amongst parliaments around the world that MPs tend to be members of political parties, with their parliamentary activities usually guided by party priorities. Political parties can indeed be an effective mechanism for aggregating the contributions of individual MPs and using the strength of numbers to push for parliamentary action. On the other hand, party politics can sometimes constrain MPs actions, with the priorities of individual MPs having to be sifted and ordered according to the priorities of the political party as a whole.

Cross-party parliamentary groups can be one key way for parliamentarians to work outside their parties, by grouping together with other like-minded Members to progress issues or activities that they commonly choose to prioritise. In this context, cross-party parliamentary groups can be a useful vehicle for driving the WPS agenda within the legislature.

Cross-party Women’s Caucuses

As the number of women MPs around the world has grown, so too have women’s caucuses proliferated. They are now a common and popular parliamentary mechanism for bringing together women MPs across party lines to work on issue which they agree are of common importance.

Women’s caucuses – which can be called by many different names, depending on the jurisdiction – enable women MPs to come together outside of official parliamentary mechanisms to discuss issues of interest, develop their responses and strategies for parliamentary action. In an institutional context where women were historically (significantly) outnumbered, women’s caucuses started as a way of enabling the small cohorts of women MPs elected into the legislature to bloc together to more effectively lobby within parliament on gender equality and women’s rights issues. Even in parliaments which now have larger numbers of women represented, women’s caucuses are still seen as an important mechanism for focusing the attention of busy law-makers specifically on what they can specifically do to promote and protect gender equality and women’s rights. In some countries, these caucuses come together more informally, while in others, they have an official status within the legislature.

Women’s caucuses have proven very effective in harnessing the power of women MPs scattered across multiple parties for the benefit of gender equality issues. Whether they come together formally or as more informal alliances of like-minded MPs, such caucuses or factions can operate as reliable voting blocs, in relation to key gender equality legislation and have also been effective in organizing public hearings on gender equality topics within parliament. Such caucuses are also often a very useful contact point for women’s rights NGOs to engage in parliamentary processes.

It is important to recognise that the WPS agenda is NOT an agenda only for women MPs but one that should be prioritised by MPs no matter their sex. Nonetheless, women caucuses often play a key role in promoting gender-sensitive laws and policies, including in relation to WPS. In Italy, this role has been institutionalised, with the WPS National Action Plan requiring that “the parliament’s Cross-Party Caucus for Women, Women’s Rights and Gender Equality publish an annual progress report on the

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implementation of the WPS agenda, in collaboration with civil society organisations and the Interdepartmental Committee for Human Rights”.

A growing challenge to women’s peace and security: mitigating the gendered impacts of violent extremism and radicalisation

Since UNSCR 1325 was endorsed almost two decades ago, the types of violence and the groups perpetrating violence have evolved, with violent extremism increasingly threatening the safety and security of people, including women and girls, around the world. A gender analysis of violent extremism shows that women may be involved as perpetrators (whether actively or through coercion from male authority figures) and supporters (including as family members), as well as active stakeholders in work on preventing violent extremism (PVE). The need to focus on the gendered impacts of violent extremism was recognised in UNSCR 2242 (2015), as part of the broader WPS agenda and more recently in the UN Secretary General’s 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which included a specific section on gender.

In Pakistan, members of the Parliamentary Women’s Caucus (PWC) have been active in promoting gender sensitive laws and policies. In 2014, members of PWC participated in discussion aimed at drawing attention to the need to ensure efforts to combat violent extremism and radicalisation were gender sensitive and reflected the social, political, cultural and economic differences that impact on men and women who are susceptible to radicalisation or violent extremism. In 2012, it was reported that civil society from the State Province of Balochistan formed an alliance with the provincial women’s parliamentary caucus, who agreed to support the coalition’s recommendations regarding PVE and WPS in the Balochistan Provincial Assembly.

Cross-party Women, Peace and Security Parliamentary Group

Around the world, there has been a growing trend for parliamentarians to come together across party structures through Parliamentary Groups that are dedicated to particular issues. These cross-party groups enable dialogue outside the official processes of parliament, and are particularly common in relation to human rights issues, such as promoting women’s peace and security. Such groups promote consensus-building, and can be a mechanism for enabling MPs to develop proposals that can then be advocated within their own party structures. In some instances, such parliamentary groups may even decide to jointly propose laws or other reforms.

As discussed above, a Women’s Caucus is one of the most well-known form of cross-party parliamentary group, but it is possible to also group together specifically on an issue such as women’s peace and security. This can be particularly useful in recognition of the reality that WPS is not a “women’s issue” but an issue that affects all of society and requires action from male and female MPs.

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In this context, it is notable that male MPs have increasingly been engaged in cross-party gender equality advocacy work via the HeforShe campaign promoted by the United Nations, which has also provided opportunities for WPS advocacy. For example, the Icelandic Parliament used the annual HeforShe activities to "organise a 'barbershop conference' on sexual violence and harassment within the political sphere for all members of parliaments in 2017...[which] allowed men to “educate themselves on how both genders gain from gender equality” and encouraged men’s participation “in the gender equality discussion”.

UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security (APPG-WPS)

Registered in 2006, the APPG-WPS brings together more than 40 MPs from the UK Parliament to discuss WPS issues and action. The Group focuses on what the UK can and is doing to support the WPS agenda. Notably, the APPG -WPS has a permanent secretariat, which is hosted by Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), a network of 17 NGOs working on WPS issues.

With the support of GAPS, in partnership, the APPG -WPS works to raise the profile of WPS issues within Parliament, strengthen the existing network of MPs and link them to NGOs working on relevant issues, advocate for action by the UK Government in relation to WPS and share information and good practice from other jurisdictions. The APPG-WPS also hosts the UK Government’s annual Report to Parliament on Women, Peace and Security, which provides an opportunity for MPs to debate and discuss the UK’s approach to WPS. The APPG-WPS also holds events on thematic and country-based WPS issues, including for example, in relation to WPS issues in Somalia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Northern Ireland.

Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff: WPS and Parliamentary Groups

➢ All MPs – male and female – can take action to discuss, debate and address WPS issues.
➢ A cross section of MPs may come together to form a Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security, which can be used to promote the WPS agenda within and outside parliament, including by organising seminars on WPS topics, working with relevant CSOs to develop policy briefs and papers or using the Group’s influence to engage with the media on WPS issues;
➢ Women MPs may use a Cross-Party Women’s Caucus to come together as a like-minded group to promote women’s rights, including the WPS agenda.

Question for Parliament:

✓ Does the parliament have a Women’s Caucus? If so, does it have a clear action plan and necessary resources to implement its priorities? Do these priorities include activities to progress implementation of the WPS agenda?
✓ Does MPs have the power to establish cross-party parliamentary groups? If so, are there a group of members who would be interested in setting up a WPS Parliamentary Group, to advocate for implementation of the WPS agenda? Is there any NGO or other body that has the capacity and interest in supporting such a Group?

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78 https://www.heforshe.org/en


80 This summary is taken from the webpage on the APPG-WPS hosted by Global Action for Peace and Security: http://gaps-uk.org/about/appg/.

81 For more information see http://gaps-uk.org/about/.
10. Harnessing parliamentary staff

Feedback from parliamentarians around the world demonstrates that the support of capable, well-informed parliamentary staff can be crucial in enabling MPs to discharge their mandates effectively. In reality, MPs are often called on to manage numerous competing duties and portfolios, as lawmakers, committee members and individual representatives of their constituencies. This can result in a very heavy workload – the advice and assistance of parliamentary staff is invaluable in managing these different roles.

In many countries, a professional staff is employed to service Ministers in relation to their parliamentary business, individual Members of Parliament and committees. These staff usually have a strong understanding of the rules of the parliament, as well as good research and analytical skills. That said, many parliaments report that they are under-staffed and under-resourced, with insufficient staff to assist with their research and reporting writing tasks, and sometimes even inadequate legal support to assist with reviewing and amending legislation. It is critical that parliaments ensure they have sufficient budgets to do their work effectively.

In the context of the WPS agenda, it is important to ensure that MPs have proper staff support to properly undertake their reviews of laws, programmes and policies. In real terms, this means that staff themselves may benefit from capacity building seminars on gender equality, the WPS agenda (key resolutions, programming approaches and the WPS NAP if one exists) and peacebuilding. Staff may also find capacity development on gender responsive budgeting useful, in the context of presenting a budget analysis in relation to the WPS agenda.

Summary of Action Points for MPs and Parliamentary Staff

➢ Parliamentary staff can be identified within the parliamentary secretariat for specific capacity development in relation to WPS issues, to ensure that in-house expertise is available to MPs in relation to the WPS agenda;
➢ Parliamentary staff can proactively engage with MPs and civil society to help facilitate the development of partnerships across these groups;
➢ Parliamentary staff can stay alert for national, regional and international opportunities for MPs to engage in WPS events and activities and proactively share this information with MPs.

Question for Parliament:
✓ Do key committees responsible for overseeing implementation of the WPS agenda have sufficient staff to discharge their duties effectively?
✓ Is there sufficient specialist staff who can provide MPs with gender analysis as needed, including in relation to WPS issues?
✓ Is there sufficient specialist staff who can provide MPs with gender-response budget analysis?
11. Useful resources

UN Security Council Resolutions

➢ CEDAW General Recommendation No.30 (2015),

Guidelines & reports

Annex 1: Statement of the CEDAW Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians


Decision 45/VII: National parliaments and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its relationship with parliamentarians

1. At its forty-first session, the Committee adopted a standard paragraph on “parliament” in its concluding observations in order to draw to the attention of State parties, the importance of involving their parliaments in the reporting process under article 18 of the Convention and the implementation of all the provisions of the Convention.

2. The aim of the present note is to clarify and strengthen the role of national parliaments vis-à-vis the Convention. The note is also aimed at clarifying the relationship between the Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

I. Role of parliaments in the process of ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol and withdrawal of reservations

3. The procedure for ratification of and accession to international instruments as well as for the withdrawal of reservations varies from State to State. In most States, approval by parliament is necessary before the deposit of the instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Similarly, decisions concerning reservations as well as their withdrawals are also taken in the parliament. This parliamentary procedure also applies to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Consequently, parliaments have a strategic role to play with respect to the ratification of and accession to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. As the Convention and its Optional Protocol have not attained universal ratification, parliaments can play a significant role in encouraging their States to become a party to the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Similarly, as the Convention is the treaty with the largest number of reservations, parliaments can also play a significant role in their withdrawal.

II. Parliaments and the implementation of the Convention

4. Parliaments and their members have a vital role to play in ensuring respect for the principles enunciated in the Convention and they have a wide range of tools at their disposal to do so. In discharging their traditional duty of overseeing the work of government, parliaments can ensure that States parties comply fully with the provisions of the Convention. Parliaments and their members have a fundamental responsibility in their role of “constituency”, which is the basis of the legal system. The functions of parliaments, notably legislative and budgetary functions and oversight of the executive branch of the Government, are at the heart of the implementation of the principles and rights enshrined in the Convention.
The implementation of the Convention includes the incorporation of the principle of non-discrimination against women in national legislation, including in the Constitution of the State party. It also imposes an obligation on the State party to condemn discrimination against women, to abolish all discriminatory laws and to adopt, whenever appropriate, temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality between women and men. It also obligates States parties to adopt appropriate policies and establish mechanisms aimed at promoting equality between sexes. As such, parliamentarians can take active measures to ensure that national laws, policies, actions, programmes and budgets reflect the principles and obligations in the Convention.

5. The budgetary functions and the monitoring of governmental action are vital for a better implementation of laws relating to equality between sexes, through the approval of adequate budgets and a regular oversight of the impact of governmental measures with respect to the condition of women.

6. Parliament, as an organ representing the population as a whole, reflects the diversity of opinion and interests in the country by reason of its privileged access to the whole population. As such, parliamentarians can be key players in raising awareness of the Convention and its Optional Protocol to the population at large, and among women in particular.

III. Role of parliaments in the drafting of reports and follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee

7. States are not legally obliged to involve parliaments in the drafting of reports under article 18, as it is the State which has the primary responsibility of doing so; however, as the Convention is binding on all branches of government, it is desirable that States parties involve parliament in the reporting process under article 18 of the Convention, the implementation of the Convention and the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee. States parties are strongly encouraged to establish an appropriate mechanism to facilitate collaboration between parliament and government with regard to the input of its parliament in the elaboration of reports, including its role in following up on the concluding observations of the Committee. The monitoring role of parliament with respect to the compliance by the State of its international obligations, could considerably enhance the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee.

8. Consequently, it is necessary for States parties to urge parliaments, many of which now have some structures in place, such as parliamentary committees focusing on human rights including gender equality, to take an active part in the work of the Committee in general, as well as in the implementation of its provisions in their own country.

IV. Action of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its relationship with the Committee

9. IPU has always strived to bring a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation and the work of the Committee. It is playing a key role in disseminating the Convention and its Optional Protocol among parliamentarians. During its conferences and the sessions of its Assembly, the organization regularly invites States that have not ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol to do so. It also encourages States parties that have made reservations to the Convention to withdraw them and to fulfil their obligations. The Secretary-General of IPU writes to the
presidents of the legislative assemblies to inform them about the upcoming consideration of the report of their country by the Committee. Once the Committee’s concluding observations are available, a letter is sent to the parliament concerned to bring to its attention the recommendations adopted. In 2003, IPU, with the assistance of the Division for the Advancement of Women, published a practical guide for the use of parliamentarians on the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Every year, IPU organizes briefings on the Convention, which are addressed to women parliamentarians in particular. IPU also provides, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, technical assistance programmes in order to build the capacities of parliaments and help them to fulfil their role regarding the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Since 2006, IPU also provides the Committee with country-specific information, including data on the political participation of women in parliament and in government as well as at the local level with regard to States whose reports are under consideration by the Committee.

V. Recommendations

10. The Committee recommends that States parties ensure the full participation of parliament and its members in the reporting process and the full implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

11. Given the key role of parliaments, the Committee recommends that States parties ensure that parliamentarians, as representatives of the people, be made aware and informed of the Committee’s work so that they may take it into account in their legislative functions and relay it to their constituencies and to the public at large.

12. The Committee recommends that State parties ensure that all relevant information is made available to parliamentarians on a regular basis through appropriate parliamentary support services.

13. The Committee further recommends that information received by Governments on their obligations as State parties and other matters of concern are brought to the attention of parliamentarians.

14. The Committee recommends that whenever members of the Committee are invited to visit a State party, it is desirable that the State party organize meetings with parliamentarians.

15. The Committee encourages States parties to include in their reports, information on all parliamentary initiatives in the elaboration of laws in order to ensure full incorporation of provisions of the Convention into domestic legislation.

16. The Committee reiterates the importance of strengthening the national machinery dedicated to equality at the level of parliament, such as commissions on gender equality, missions and information on inquiries relating to violence against women, and improvement of legislation on equality between women and men.

17. The Committee draws the attention of States parties to the fact that institutional linkages and informal relations with civil society and women’s organizations are fundamental to the promotion of women’s rights by parliaments.

18. The Committee encourages States parties to include in their delegations before the Committee for the examination of their report members of parliament as well as a special adviser in charge of relations
between the Government and the parliament in order to improve the visibility of parliamentary responsibilities.

19. The Committee calls on States parties to evaluate its collaboration with their national parliaments and other parliaments and to take appropriate measures to enhance cooperation between parliaments in order to exchange best practices on the implementation of the Convention.