



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled**

**“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Institut international pour la paix, la justice et les droits de l’homme, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The International Institute for Peace, Justice and Human Rights and the Global Network for Rights and Development applauds the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially the attention given to women and armed conflict. Twenty years on, the objectives regarding women and conflict are just as pertinent, as the current state of the world is experiencing war and conflict in many corners, and it is women and girls who are bearing the brunt of these consequences. There has never been a more urgent need to consolidate international efforts to assure the protection of women and girls in conflict zones. Additionally, there remains a critical need for governments and civil society to continue to maintain and strengthen efforts to remove all barriers which impede women's full and equal participation in decision-making, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and other peace initiatives, which are all essential to the achievement of sustained peace.

We welcome the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security, starting with Resolution 1325, which emphasises the key role women must play in conflict resolution, peace negotiations and sustainable peace building. We recognise that the side lining of women from peace-building processes can have negative effects on societies emerging from conflict, as it can hinder or undermine durable peace, security and reconciliation. In addition, the exclusion of women from decision-making means that women's needs and concerns are often left off the agenda when it comes to rebuilding post-conflict societies, which can lead to the long-term marginalisation of women in society.

Welcoming the Security Council's Resolution 1889, which expressed "deep concern" at the lack of participation of women at all stages of the peace process, particularly in official roles in the mediation process, we regret that the 2012 United Nations Secretary General's Report to the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, found only 4 women had been included on negotiating teams, out of 14 peace-negotiations which had been co-managed by the United Nations the previous year in 2011. This underrepresentation of women in decision-making, especially at the higher levels must change and there must be political will to provide adequate funding and training to create an enabling environment in which women can participate equally and fully at all levels of peace building processes.

Affirming the Security Council's Resolution 2122, we agree that women's and girls' empowerment, as well as gender equality are key to maintain international peace and security. Concrete and practical steps are required to create an enabling environment to ensure women have the same opportunities as men to participate equally and fully in the development and implementation of post-conflict strategies and it is the responsibility of governments to implement National Action Plans in order to carry out implementation of the women, peace and security resolutions. We urge all Member States who have not yet committed to implement a National Action Plan to do so and we strongly recommend consultation with civil society at the earliest stages of development, implementation and monitoring phases.

Recognizing that the effects of conflict are gendered, it is essential that women and girls have their voices heard and taken into account. They themselves will have the best understanding and knowledge of the challenges affecting them and with their personal insights and knowledge, are best placed to express their needs and devise strategies and solutions that ensure their requirements, perspectives and

rights are recognised and incorporated into the rebuilding of post-conflict societies. As part of the solution to increasing women's participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict rebuilding, it is critical to establish a dialogue between women's groups who can represent and voice the concerns and priorities of women and girls to decision-makers.

We affirm the active participation of women as empowered actors in peace building processes, not just to be overlooked as victims of war, but to be considered as resilient and capable agents for lasting peace. We have seen the considerable impacts that women have made when they come together to mobilise for peace, as was the case in Liberia in 2003, where women were instrumental in achieving a peace settlement between the Government and rebel factions. More recently, Syrian women affected by the civil war both inside and outside the country have been mobilising since early on in the conflict and have consistently appealed to the international community to incorporate their perspectives and needs in the peace efforts. We applaud the role of United Nations Women who have been assisting this process by creating forums and bringing women together so that their voices can be heard. With political will, and the rejection of the idea that women are merely victims of conflict, there can be further progress to achieving the objectives as set out in the Women and Armed Conflict Diagnosis of the Beijing Declaration.

We are gravely concerned by the unending reports of sexual and gender-based violence being perpetrated against women and girls in situations of war and conflict, which has reached "epidemic proportions". We urge the rejection of all forms of violence against women and girls and welcome the recognition and prosecution of rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity and in the worst cases, genocide, as experienced in Bosnia, Darfur and Rwanda. The pain and humiliation inflicted by perpetrators is not only felt by victims but can also destroy family bonds and wider community relationships. Rape as a weapon of war also has serious health consequences as it increases the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. There needs to be greater protection mechanisms for women and girls in conflict, especially physical protection in high risk areas, better access to justice and the full prosecution of perpetrators. We recognise the heightened vulnerability felt by women and girls in times of conflict and we welcome the initiative, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence, working across 13 United Nations agencies, mandated to end sexual violence in conflict, through better coordination, increased support for prevention of sexual violence and effective care for survivors.

Recognizing that conflict inevitably produces refugees and/or internally displaced populations, the majority being women and girls, we welcome the Beijing Declaration's focus on the protection, assistance and training to refugee women and displaced women. We agree that women's decision-making power should extend to refugee programs and particularly to decisions regarding camp management and resources to reduce the possibility of women and girls being excluded or discriminated against from accessing services directly. We welcome the suggestion to promote leadership training to young refugee, displaced and internally displaced women to promote their leadership and decision-making skills.

We are concerned for the safety and security of women who have no choice but to head their households alone, thus becoming the sole providers and caregivers for their families. Conflict means that these women are often unable to access any

family and community support and face dire circumstances, including anxiety, isolation, a desperate lack of resources and a heightened risk of violence and exploitation. It is estimated that the Syrian conflict has produced 1 in 4 refugee households, which are headed solely by a woman. In times of conflict, women and girls are more likely to suffer discrimination, which can affect their access to vital resources and services. It is essential that all efforts are made to uphold the rights of refugee and displaced women and girls and appropriate human rights education must be made available to them.

As we move towards a post-2015 framework, the important role that women can and do play in achieving and maintaining a culture of sustained peace must be recognised. Furthermore we urge for the inclusion of an indicator or target in the post-2015 framework which addresses women's full and equal participation in conflict resolution and peace-building processes.

Supporting the full engagement and participation of women at all levels of conflict resolution and peace-building processes, both at official levels and within civil society organisations and grassroots levels, will inevitably contribute to the post-2015 goal of achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, not just within conflict and post-conflict settings, but in broader society in general, to the benefit of all.

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