

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 4 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of
Germany to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of Germany, the Security Council will hold an open debate on “United Nations peacekeeping operations: women in peacekeeping” on Thursday, 11 April 2019. In order to help steer the discussions on the subject, Germany has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Christoph Heusgen**
Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 4 April 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the subject “United Nations peacekeeping operations: women in peacekeeping”, to be held on 11 April 2019

1. Background and developments

1. The Security Council, in its landmark resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, reaffirmed the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The need to strengthen the role of women and to increase their numbers in peacekeeping has since been continuously reiterated, including in Council resolutions [2242 \(2015\)](#), [2436 \(2018\)](#) and [2447 \(2018\)](#).

2. The full, effective and meaningful participation of female peacekeepers in United Nations peace operations is critical, as it contributes to greater credibility of missions and more effective mandate implementation. The presence of female military, police and civilian experts sends an important signal regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women to host communities. It challenges traditional gender norms, often makes the peacekeeping force more approachable for women in the community and, together with other measures, can assist in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

3. In addition to an increase in the numbers of women in peacekeeping, gender-sensitive training prior to deployment is key to ensuring that peacekeepers are sensitized to take into account the needs of local women and girls, as well as to ensure female participation.

4. The United Nations has taken important steps to make the effective and meaningful participation of women an operational reality in United Nations peacekeeping missions. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus constitutes an outstanding example in this regard: for the first time in the history of United Nations peacekeeping, a mission is led by a female special representative of the Secretary-General, a female force commander and a female senior police adviser.

5. Strong and combined efforts of troop- and police-contributing countries and the United Nations Secretariat have contributed to increasing the overall figures of women in peacekeeping.

6. However, overall progress still lags behind: the 15 per cent goal for military observers and staff officers – set at the London 2016 Peacekeeping Ministerial – was not met in 2018. Less than 5 per cent of military contingents and less than 8 per cent of the members of formed police units are women. Only 28 per cent of the civilians in peace operations are female. Moreover, the number on the civilian side has stagnated and risks regressing with current and future planned downsizing, making the overall goal of gender parity in staff of the United Nations system by 2028 more difficult to reach.

7. The United Nations has recognized that it can assist the efforts of troop- and police-contributing countries to attract more qualified women to become uniformed peacekeepers by making the conditions of deployment more accessible and attractive to women, including by addressing conditions in missions, strengthening the deployment of female peacekeepers and shortening minimum deployment periods for

women. On the civilian side, Member States have a critical role to play in raising awareness and promoting women for the range of roles in peace operations missions.

8. The Department of Peace Operations therefore presented a new uniformed gender parity strategy as part of the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity in January 2019, outlining concrete actions to increase the share of female uniformed peacekeeping personnel significantly, to 25 per cent for military observers and staff officers and 15 per cent for military contingents, by 2028.

9. As part of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, more than 150 Member States, 4 international and regional organizations and the United Nations Secretariat have committed to increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions, as well as to ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes. Member States are taking concrete steps towards improving female representation in United Nations peace operations. As one of the most recent efforts, Canada and the United Nations partnered to launch the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations and set up, on the occasion of the 2019 Peacekeeping Ministerial on 29 March 2019, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations to support the Initiative. One key objective of the Initiative is to address several persisting barriers to the increased deployment of female uniformed personnel that had been identified in a baseline study conducted in 2018.

2. Objective and scope

10. The aim of the open debate is to provide Member States with the opportunity to discuss and exchange views on how the Security Council and Member States can best support and strengthen efforts to increase the numbers of women in peacekeeping. Member States, in particular troop- and police-contributing countries, are invited to discuss concrete strategies and make recommendations, as well as to share examples of national or regional best practices in overcoming existing barriers to women's participation.

11. Member States are encouraged to focus on the following questions:

(a) How can the Security Council and Member States more effectively support the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peacekeeping?

(b) What barriers to increased female participation exist in United Nations peace operations on the uniformed personnel side, and how can they be addressed by the United Nations, by regional organizations and by Member States? What is the role of the Security Council in reducing those barriers in the mandating process?

(c) What barriers impact women's participation in civilian peacekeeping, and how can Member States support greater inclusion?

(d) How do Member States address barriers to women's participation in their own armed forces and police, and how do they address existing patterns of exclusion? What concrete steps can be taken, in the short and over the longer term, to address organizational culture in national armed forces and police in order to make it more inclusive?

(e) To what extent can mentors and role models contribute to further mobilization of women and provide a support system for them? How can experiences of women soldiers, police officers and civil experts from United Nations peace operations best be shared?

3. Format

12. The open debate will be chaired by Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defence of Germany. The Secretary-General; Major General Kristin Lund, first female Force Commander and currently Head of Mission and Chief of Staff at the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; and Merekaje Lorna Nanjia, Secretary-General, South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme, will brief the Council. Following the open debate, the Chair will circulate a Chair's summary.

13. In order to assure an outcome-oriented discussion, we would kindly request all speakers to keep their speaking time limited to five minutes (see [S/2017/507](#)) and encourage all participants to focus their statements on specific examples, best practice, commitments and recommendations.

14. The presidency will ask speakers to refrain from repeating already-stated positions and will encourage speakers to ask questions to briefers and will provide an opportunity to briefers to respond as appropriate during the debate.
