CHAIR’S SUMMARY, UN Peacekeeping Ministerial: The Addis Ababa Preparatory Meeting on Women, Peace and Security, co-hosted by Canada and Ethiopia

Over 200 participants from 63 countries, international organizations, civil society and academia attended the January 2019 Preparatory Meeting in Addis Ababa. This summary is provided by the two co-hosts of the meeting, Canada and Ethiopia.

The meeting was officially opened by President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia, with keynote addresses delivered by Ethiopian State Minister of Defence Lelalem Yohannes, Director General Larisa Galadza of Global Affairs Canada, and UN Special Representative of the Secretary General Hanna Serwaa Tetteh.

Discussions in Addis Ababa identified a number of tangible action items for consideration by the United Nations and Member States intended to support a successful 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial. These action items also support the objectives established in the Action for Peacekeeping Initiative’s Declaration of Shared Commitments and sustain momentum in the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as we approach the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This summary has been prepared by Canada and Ethiopia to share more broadly the recommendations and best practices discussed during the meeting in Addis Ababa.

ACTION ITEMS

The UN Secretary General

1. To ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in UN decision-making with respect to peace operations policy, the Secretary General should, for the upcoming 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial:
   a. ensure that UN representation reflects UN commitments to gender parity;
   b. encourage Member States to consider gender parity in the composition of their delegations;
   c. invite the active participation of regional organizations and civil society in deliberations, including in particular women from countries host to UN peace operations.

2. To ensure full implementation of agreed WPS objectives as reflected in the Declaration of Shared Commitments, the Secretary General and the Department of Peace Operations should work to ensure that mission design reflects the WPS objectives and advise the UN Security Council when gaps could preclude missions from meeting these objectives.

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3. To ensure the full and effective mainstreaming of the WPS agenda at the 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, the Secretary General is encouraged to identify clear and specific WPS objectives for each session.

The United Nations

4. To better assess progress against WPS targets and commitments, as well as to improve the design, conduct and performance of UN missions, the Department of Peace Operations should continue to use gender based analysis, including through use of data collection and analytics systems, gender disaggregated data, and existing data sets.

5. To ensure the full integration of WPS objectives in the conduct and organization of its missions, the UN should make gender training and capacity building a core and mandatory component of professional development and performance management for all leaders.

6. To help ensure that its gender parity strategies\(^1\) and targets are met, the Department of Peace Operations and all other UN departments, programs, funds and agencies operating in mission environments should work to identify in-mission cultures, policies, infrastructure and management practices that act as barriers to women’s meaningful participation in all roles and at all levels.

7. In order to increase the meaningful participation and representation of women in peace operations, including both civilian and uniformed personnel, the Department of Peace Operations should establish mentorship and support networks to assist women who wish to deploy in identifying and seizing opportunities, including at leadership levels.

8. To ensure the inclusion and meaningful engagement of local civil society organizations (including women’s organizations) in the design and implementation of UN peace operations, UN-led peace processes and political dialogues, and UN-supported peacebuilding initiatives, the United Nations should include this engagement as an indicator of performance measurement for senior mission leadership.

9. In order to sustain and build upon progress made to date in advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the United Nations should continue to encourage and support the adoption and, most importantly, the implementation of WPS National Action Plans by Member States, and in particular those who are hosts or contributors to UN peace operations, in advance of the 20\(^{th}\) anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in 2020.

10. In order to strengthen the focus on prevention in the context of the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in UN peace operations, the United Nations should undertake a comprehensive assessment of the training it currently provides, address gaps, and revise as necessary to

\(^1\) Including: UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity (2017), the Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2018), and the UN Uniformed Personnel Gender Parity Strategy

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prioritize prevention. In parallel, the Department of Peace Operations should continue to work with troop and police contributing countries to ensure that relevant national policies and regulations reflect UN standards.

UN Member States

11. To increase the number of women deployed on peace operations, Member States should consider making national commitments to the targets set out in relevant UN strategies and policies at the March 2019 Peacekeeping Ministerial.²

12. To ensure that civil society organizations are meaningfully engaged at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, Member States are encouraged to work closely with regional organizations and national civil society actors, in particular women’s organizations, in preparation of the meeting in March, 2019 and to build partnerships with these organizations through consultations on peace operations.

13. To facilitate the increased and meaningful participation of women in peace operations, Member States should:
   a. consider undertaking a comprehensive assessment of barriers to the increased and meaningful participation of women in peace operations in their own systems, including in the areas of administration, policy and regulation, training and career development, equipment, infrastructure, and support services;
   b. consider adopting policies and practices that incentivize the increased, full and meaningful participation of women, consistent with the principles of equity, flexibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

14. In order to facilitate the adoption and implementation of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) by as many countries as possible in advance of the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, Member States are encouraged to partner together to share experiences, including through regional organizations, and accelerate adoption and implementation of NAPs. To be effective, NAPs should include clear, transparent and time-bound objectives.

15. To support the full and comprehensive system-wide implementation of the UN zero-tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and to support its commitment to a victims-centred approach, Member States should consider pledging additional resources to enable the requisite structural and administrative reforms at the headquarters and mission levels.

16. To enable a victims-centred approach to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Member States should review their own legal frameworks and practices and identify areas where transparency could be increased in support of fair access to justice for victims.

² Including: UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity (2017), the Policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2018), and the UN Uniformed Personnel Gender Parity Strategy
MEETING SUMMARY

Setting the Scene

UN officials provided participants with an overview of the upcoming 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial on Uniformed Capabilities, Performance and Protection of Civilians. The importance of ensuring the effective and meaningful mainstreaming of the WPS agenda throughout the Ministerial was underlined.

Implementation of our shared commitments under the auspices of the Action for Peacekeeping Initiative was identified as the key priority for the Ministerial, including associated efforts to ensure gender parity across the United Nations. The recently launched of Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy was shared with participants.

Data

Dr. Jeni Klugman, Managing Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, delivered a presentation highlighting how data can be used to advance implementation of the WPS agenda and make peace operations more effective, centering on themes of inclusion, justice and security. To achieve this, she stressed the need for peacekeeping missions to collect appropriate gender-disaggregated data through a well-defined data collection strategy across all missions over several years.

In response to Dr. Klugman’s presentation, respondents from the floor highlighted the need for mission planning and analysis processes to make effective use of the data collected. In particular, there was a recognized need to enhance qualitative understandings of the data and country-specific narratives to ensure that it is fully capturing the realities and experiences of women in peacekeeping. For example, as opposed to tracking solely the numbers of women peacekeepers deployed, there is also a need to understand in what capacity women are being deployed and the day-to-day work they carry out at mission.

Increasing Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace Operations

While recognizing that significant progress has been achieved the WPS agenda since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, participants noted that achieving our shared objectives with respect to increased and meaningful participation of women in peace operations will require deliberate and sustained effort, as well as resources to support these efforts.

Participants then engaged in an interactive exercise focused on how the UN and Member States can create receptive environments for woman peacekeepers. The exercise revealed how cultural, structural, policy, bureaucratic and resource barriers in the UN and in Member States can prevent the increased and meaningful participation of women in peace operations. Participants observed that removing these barriers will require concerted action by both the UN system and individual Member States.

Discussions highlighted how a number of factors, including human resource policies, regulations, administrative practices, and organizational structures based in whole or in part on long-standing gender stereotypes continue to

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impede the increased and meaningful participation of women in peace operations. Identification of entrenched barriers and potential solutions requires detailed analysis and assessment.

Breakout groups highlighted the need to address systemic barriers, including with respect to the availability of equipment and infrastructure, rotation and leave policies, training and mentorship, career management, and support frameworks for deployed personnel. That removing such barriers will require joint and deliberate action by both the United Nations and Member States, and could potentially require new resources was acknowledged.

Participants questioned why initiatives to advance WPS commitments are disproportionately dependent on voluntary extra-budgetary resources. While some suggested that consideration should be given to measures to incentivize greater participation by women, others insisted that any such measures must be guided by the principles of equity, flexibility, need and cost-effectiveness.

**WPS National Action Plans**

Presentations by several Member States underscored the enduring and critical importance of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) in order to mobilize and sustain political will for change, and to hold governments to account for implementation. While many countries host to UN missions, and many troop and police contributing countries have National Action Plans in place, significant gaps remain.

It was noted that Member States with existing NAPs have invaluable experience that could be of great benefit to others in the design and implementation of their own. Establishing and supporting partnerships between Member States, and between Member States and the United Nations, to encourage the development of NAPs would help increase overall numbers and help build constituency for further progress. Civil society has a critical role to play in helping Member States identify needs and priorities, to undertake gender conflict analysis, to implement objectives, and to sustain political will.

Discussants underscored that NAPs offer a vehicle by which Member States to implement many of the shared commitments agreed under the auspices of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Several Member States also highlighted the importance of applying a gender-based analysis and gender conflict analysis to the full spectrum of their policies and practices in the peace operations domain. Consideration of the gender dimensions of a wide range of issues (including political processes, the promotion and defence of human rights, disarmament and demobilization, reintegration, stabilization, community engagement, security sector reform, training and capacity building, child soldiers and children in armed conflict, and information operations) can all contribute to enhanced mission performance and effectiveness.

**Building Partnerships with Local Community Groups, Women’s Organizations, and other Stakeholders**

A diverse panel of civil society representatives stressed that setting conditions for a durable and inclusive peace is not possible without the engagement, support and confidence of affected populations. Recognizing that the Action for Peacekeeping initiative emphasizes the central importance of political processes to the success of UN peace operations,
speakers highlighted the need for local populations be fully engaged in mission design and execution across the political, stabilization, peacebuilding and conflict prevention domains. In the words of one discussant: *don’t come to us with a plan; engage us in a discussion about developing a plan.*

Furthermore, while women are often well engaged at the local level at peace tables, efforts are needed to ensure that national peace negotiations are well linked to local efforts and include the active participation of women. Building political empowerment of women is necessary to enable this engagement.

Panelists stressed that local organizations can help the UN, regional organizations and Member States to understand how conflict and instability are affecting the local population, particularly women, and assist in identifying opportunities to stave off further violence. Participants agreed that the unique perspectives and knowledge of local populations is essential to the design of effective military and police operations, as well as political processes and programs. In particular, participants noted that local organizations are essential to effective early warning and conflict prevention.

Moreover, discussants underlined the importance for UN personnel to understand what civil society may already be doing, and to avoid actions that could disrupt, undermine, or marginalize locally-owned initiatives aimed at addressing conflict-drivers in mission environments. The UN should support agency where necessary, reinforce local ownership where possible, and seek to ensure inclusion whenever UN efforts must supplant or replace local or national processes.

It was repeatedly noted that including women does not simply mean including women’s organizations, but rather ensuring that women are fully and meaningfully integrated into the full spectrum of mission activities and initiatives, particularly in the political domain. Women’s participation should not be restricted to women’s issues. That said, a simple “add women and stir” approach is not viable. Ensuring effective integration requires understanding constituency and legitimacy at the local level.

There was also agreement that the UN has a critical role to play when re-establishing trust between conflict-affected populations and state authorities is required, where the scale of a crisis surpasses the capacity of the host government to respond, or where the fundamental human rights of local populations are at risk.

Participants noted the increasing space within the African Union for engagement with civil society organizations and the benefits of this enhanced partnership. Civil society organizations are interested in further deepening this partnership and appreciate the developments in the peace and security architect of the African Union that facilitates this collaboration.

Participants also discussed the important role local community groups can play in providing assistance in bridging the gap between the field and the UN Security Council. It was noted that effective engagement with local communities can help UN missions to communicate their mission, mandate and purpose to populations with potentially limited access to credible information. Further, some participants noted that this kind of sustained and regular dialogue builds and sustains trust with communities and provides channels for rapidly addressing community concerns, in particular with respect to the conduct and discipline of peacekeepers, human rights, the protection of civilians, and inter-communal tensions.

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There was broad agreement that, in all communities, women represent a vital and yet under-represented constituency. However, women’s safety can also be compromised through their active participation in political processes. As a consequence, there is a need for UN missions to understand the unique risks potentially faced by women in mission environments, and consider options to mitigate those risks where possible.

It was stressed that the marginalization and exclusion of women can compound challenges in operational environments, including poverty and fragility, political instability, violence, societal fragmentation, and the break-down of the rule of law. Participants agreed that achieving a political solution in a given conflict can only be made easier by building the broadest constituency of local support possible, and that women are an essential constituency in this regard.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)**

Panelists stressed that a victim-centred approach to SEA requires action beyond the narrow confines of conduct and discipline. Participants noted how a lack of coherence in approach between peace operations in the field, the UN Secretariat, programs, funds and agencies fails to put the rights and dignity of victims first. Moreover, it was noted that existing structures are not sufficiently resourced to meet organizational requirements.

Panelists suggested that the UN should serve as a global “gold standard” when it comes to prevention and response to incidences of SEA. Participants noted an apparent disconnect between the level of ambition expressed by the Secretary-General, the Circle of Leadership on SEA, the Voluntary Compact on Preventing and Addressing SEA and current practice. Some suggested that the heads of State and Government who are members of the Circle of Leadership should have a role to play in ensuring that this ambitious standard is met, and that a review of policies and structures across the whole of the UN system for the prevention of, and response to, incidences of SEA may merit comprehensive review.

Divergences in approaches, policies, and resourcing between the secretariat, UN field missions, programs, funds and agencies was noted as a significant challenge that put the needs of the organization ahead of the needs of victims.

There was broad consensus that prevention should be at the core of practical UN efforts on SEA. It was suggested that a comprehensive review of existing training for all UN peace operations personnel may be warranted, to ensure that mandatory pre-deployment training effectively addresses differing levels of awareness amongst personnel with regard to acceptable conduct. It was stressed that standards and expectations must be clearly communicated in a responsive manner to diverse cultural perspectives.

Some participants suggested that policies pertaining to the management of personnel on deployment may likewise merit review, particularly as pertains to duration of deployments, maximum number of consecutive deployments, and leave policies governing rest-and-recreation.

There was a recognized need for further dialogue between the UN and Member States to set standards for investigation, accountability and justice when incidences of SEA occur. It was suggested that further action is required by Member States to ensure that their domestic legal frameworks provide adequate and credible means to allow victims to access justice.

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Conclusion: The UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Preparatory Meeting on Women, Peace and Security provided participants with the opportunity to have open, frank and sometimes difficult discussions on the progress to date in integrating WPS considerations and objectives into United Nations peacekeeping operations.

To ensure the effective mainstreaimg of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the 2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, the Secretary General, the UN and its Member States will need to be rigorous in the thorough and systematic application of a gender perspective to all facets of the agenda.