

“15 Years of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security”

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Speech by Sally Fegan-Wyles

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Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I make my welcoming remarks, I would like to congratulate the Swiss Government on their very strong support of this whole agenda, and of the work of the UN on the issues of Women Peace and Security. The announcement by the Minister of the 25% increase in their contribution to UN Women is especially welcome, and does indeed reflect the strong commitment of both the Government, and the Minister himself to the issue of gender equality. It is the personal example of those in leadership positions that make all the difference, as we say in Ireland ‘putting their money where their mouth is’, and we would encourage other leaders and governments to follow this inspiring example.

As we have heard from the previous speakers, Resolution 1325 was indeed a milestone in the global efforts to protect women from violence, and to promote the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and the construction of stable and just societies.

The six follow up resolutions, and the efforts made by the various departments of the UN, the Funds and Programmes, many national governments, and Civil Society organisations have led to some notable progress. The outcome of these efforts will be the focus of the High Level Review of 1325, which will be presented at the Security

Council on 22nd October, and your ideas today will be an important contribution to that discussion.

While we do not know exactly what they will say, we can guess that it could be something like my primary school report: 'has made some progress, but must try harder'. In my case they would add, "Sally should talk less, and concentrate more on the task at hand". This could equally apply to the UN.

There has been some progress:

- 1325 is now being used as the normative framework for many regional bodies, NATO, AU, EU,
- Civil society networks have been established that are very active.
- WPS now a regular topic for Security Council agenda. Friends of WPS (coordinated by Canada) now 50 member states, with 49 countries having National Action Plans, and 30 more well advanced.
- The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has made the advancement of women a strategic focus for the entire UN system. He led the establishment UN Women, headed by an Under-Secretary-General and he appointed a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2010).
- Of 15 peace agreements signed in 2014, 8 contain gender specific provisions. This compares with only 2 out of 9 agreements signed in 2010.
- In 2014, all UN mediation support teams included women; civil society groups were consulted in all processes where the UN was in a lead or co-lead role, and women's representation on negotiating parties' delegations showed a steady upward trend
- UNITAR's training on Peacemaking and Conflict Prevention trained has trained 696 women in Conflict Analysis, Mediation, and Negotiation over

the years, and this year 57% of our African region candidates were women. UNITAR also now delivers the 'UN' week of the 12 week training of around 15,000 African troops each year who will go as UN Peacekeepers, as part of the ACOTA programme led by the US government, and Combating Sexual Violence is an important topic during that training.

- All UN Peacekeeping missions have Gender Advisory teams, and have established anti-sexual violence campaigns, including training for all military personnel, and the establishment of trust funds to assist the victims.
- The UN humanitarian agencies run a range of programmes to protect women and children living in camps from violence, either inside or outside when they leave to fetch water/firewood.
- The Development agencies are training members of the judiciary, and working with governments to get anti-sexual violence laws passed.
- And of course UN Women has a major programme that covers both protection of women from violence, and the participation of women in peace making and peace building which we will hear about from my colleagues Ms Lakshmi Puri later today.

However, despite these, and many other efforts, conflict related sexual violence has continued to occur, and some studies would indicate that it is rising.

Why is this, and what can we do?

Security Council discussion on 22nd October will consider this question, and this conference provides a very timely opportunity for reflection, bring together people who are knowledgeable on these issues from so many different perspectives.

I would like to suggest two reasons why the resolutions have not had the impact we hoped for. Firstly, while there has been a lot of talk, there is no monitoring and accountability framework through which both UN entities and member states can be held to account for implementation. We know from experience that 'we get what we measure', and that such a framework would give the resolutions a lot more 'teeth'. However, we also recognise that this is a very sensitive issue for many member states. Still, hopefully it will be discussed on 22nd October.

Secondly the resolutions have failed to address the structural causes of inequality, in particular, the core beliefs and attitudes in society that make it still acceptable to treat women as being worth less than men. They address some of the symptoms, but not the underlying cause, which at the most basic level is the belief that women are worth less than men, women are a sub-species in some sense.

Last month I visited a very developed country, and an emerging economy, and in both countries I had men in senior positions seriously telling me that the reason the number of women in leadership positions was so low, was because the women themselves did not want such responsibilities. And in both cases, there were junior women sitting behind them, shaking their heads. In both countries I then asked women what they wanted. They wanted the chance to play their caring roles effectively, but they also wanted to be able to have a challenging career, including assuming leadership positions in government and private sector. In both countries they said that this was very difficult because their society did not support them socially, and that social disapproval was a pervasive force against equality.

Changing this kind of deep rooted cultural belief is very difficult. It takes constant advocacy, education and awareness raising, coupled with the application of monitoring systems that force people and institutions to be aware of their own biases against women in leadership, conscious or unconscious.

UN Women was established to provide a strong voice for gender equality. But they cannot do what needs to be done alone. We need a renewed global feminist movement, where feminist means 'those who believe in, and work for, gender equality'. We are all feminists here. Women of my generation are partially to blame for some of the backwards movement that we are seeing. In the 1970's 'women's liberation' was the cool cause of the time. In many countries, society mobilised across genders, social strata, urban/rural etc. And we made great progress, culminating in the Cairo conference of 1975. But then we turned to other causes, believing that the battle had been won.

And we should have known better. You do not change deeply held, fundamental beliefs in one generation, or even two.

So, we need to go back to the barricades, and renew our efforts to ensure that in every country, and every community, girls and women are valued equally with boys and men, and given the same opportunities to grow and learn, and participate, and be protected from violence.

And International Geneva is very well placed to promote this renewed commitment.

Geneva contribution:

- International Geneva, with its Global norm setting role, its range of peacebuilding and humanitarian actors, and its expertise in health, labour, communications and many other aspects that relate to women, peace and security, provides a unique platform for the promotion of gender equality.
- The UNOG DG, Michael Muller, who very much regrets that he could not be here today, fully believes that we must make even more use of these opportunities to continue to shape the attitudes, beliefs and values related to gender equality in a coherent way.

- One way this can be done is through public events and expert discussions. The annual Geneva Peace Talks, with the third edition coming up on 18 September, feature truly inspiring stories from female and male peacemakers from around the world. To further encourage collaboration across Geneva, for the second year in a row the United Nations with its partners is also organizing Geneva Peace Week in November, and participating entities are certainly encouraged to highlight the role of Women in Peace and Security.
- A concrete effort to deepen gender equality was launched in international Geneva, in June of this year, when the Director-General of UN Geneva announced the launch of the International Geneva Gender Champions initiative, in collaboration with the Permanent Representative of the USA and other collaborators. The intention is to generate momentum at the highest level for greater gender equality through public advocacy and concrete actions that keep the spotlight on the issue of gender equality, and lead to genuine changes in our workplace and in our programming. All members of the network will commit to specific activities that will bring greater gender equality in their work and they will share their results publicly. Many heads of UN organizations and Permanent Representatives have already signed on to the initiative.
- As a first step for UNOG, Mr. Møller announced that he would not to speak on panels that do not include any women. He also committed to continue pushing for more female appointments of senior managers.
- There is so much that all of us can do, both for gender equality in general, and in the areas of Women Peace and Security in particular.
- Let us see what other great ideas we can come up with today,

Thank you.