Enhancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Region

International Conference
Almaty, 11-12 November 2013

Final conclusions

1. Background

To date there are seven UN resolutions pertaining to Women, Peace and Security (WPS)[1] adopted by the UN Security Council. The increase of international commitments to fully recognize women's efforts in peace and security has gained momentum, not only on a global scale, but also on a regional and national level.

There have been many positive factors in recent years influencing the enforcement of the WPS agenda and its relevant UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs).

At the global level:
The adoptions of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on women in Conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations[2] and UNSCRs 2106[3] and 2122[4] in 2013 were significant steps taken. There is a growing awareness of the importance of issues related to women and conflict and the WPS agenda.

A Global Review on national and regional implementation of global commitments on WPS was undertaken in November 2013. Background Paper "National and Regional Implementation of Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security"[5] commissioned by UN Women and presented at the Global Review meeting provides an assessment of the legal, organizational and policy frameworks, the national strategies and the practical tools that national and regional actors have employed to implement the WPS agenda.

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[1] Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1620, 2106 and 2122
[2] http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/30&Lang=en
[3] http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomen_SRES2106(2013)(english).pdf
[4] http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2122(2013)
[5] The report is available at http://unwomen-eeca.org/ru/resursi/?p=1070

At the regional level:
- The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality stresses the importance of UNSCR 1325.
- The adoption of OSCE MC. DEC. 14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation deepens commitments on WPS.
- The preparation or adoption of a number of regional UNSCR 1325 Action Plans: OSCE, EU, NATO etc. indicates an increased understanding of the need for standardization at the regional level.
- In the OSCE MC.DEC. 3/11 on Elements of the Conflict Cycle the inclusion of women has been incorporated throughout the conflict cycle.
- The OSCE Gender Section is currently, in cooperation with the Peace Research Institute Oslo, analysing National Action Plans and other strategies to implement UNSCR 1325 in the OSCE region. The comparative study aims at providing OSCE participating States information and tools for an improved implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

At the national level:
More and more countries develop 1325 UNSCR National Action Plans (NAPs). This includes countries coming out of conflict, those that are in transition as well as countries that are stable. The NAPs provide States with national frameworks for implementing gender equality and gender mainstreaming commitments in the security sector, in conflict situations and peace processes.

There is increased acceptance of the concept of human security and comprehensive security in addition to 'hard' security approaches which ensures integrated and inclusive responses in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. This paves the way for better inclusion of women in these efforts.

There is strong networking of women peace activists (Association of Women's Peace Committees in Kyrgyzstan, Women Peace Corps in Tajikistan, etc.) in place.

2. The Conference findings and conclusions

On 11 and 12 November 2013 UN Women, the OSCE and the Government of Kazakhstan organized the international conference "Enhancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Region" in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The meeting gathered 110 experts, governmental representatives, and representatives from CSOs as well as international organizations, in particular from Central Asia, the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans. The purpose of the conference was to promote a dialogue and to assist countries of the OSCE region to better formulate their position and directions for an efficient creation and implementation of the WPS agenda.

The conference participants highlighted that UNSCR 1325 provided a functional framework to ensure that the rights of women are protected and integrated into the security agenda and structural reforms necessary for human security needs. In that sense, women are not mere victims and should be more actively involved as agents in conflict prevention. Implementation of UNSCR 1325 contributes to the prevention and reduction of insecurities at the national, regional and global levels. It is a comprehensive tool within preventive diplomacy, an important

mechanism for helping prevent conflicts and mitigate existing ones in the region. It was suggested that States consider the implementation of UNSCRs 2106 and 2122 as well as CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations as part of their continued commitment towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming dimensions in conflict.This starts withintegrating women in conflict analysis and conflict prevention.

Issues of concern

A number of insecurities and vulnerabilities exist in the region which have direct impact on women:

Unresolved or protracted conflicts: Where peace has not been achieved, women and men are affected differently by instability, war, displacement etc. It is therefore crucial that women are included in peace processes and sit at negotiating tables. However, given that they usually are neither combatants nor military or political leaders directly involved in the conflict, they are usually not invited to participate in the negotiations. Including women's concerns and experiences can help ensure sustainable peacebuilding in the long term.

*Conflicts over natural resource*s (water, gas, energy): Often emphasized as a national and regional issue, the reality is that these conflicts appear at the local level where communities have to share resources, so that ultimately, local users are most often impacted. As consumers, women can play an active role in the management of natural resources.

Crisis of governance: To varying degrees, some States experience problems related to corruption, credibility and leadership vacuum. Women's political participation is an essential component for establishing good governance.

Organized crime: Violence will increase or be more prevalent in areas where organized crime is present. Women can play an important role as security sector actors in the fight against organized crime and should be involved in crime prevention activities in their communities.

Trafficking of illicit drugs: Trafficking of illicit narcotics in the Central Asian region is not only the result of increased production in Afghanistan and growing global demand for narcotics, but is also proving to be a very lucrative source for income for economically vulnerable populations which have very poor employment opportunities. In this regard, economic empowerment, especially for young rural women, is an important approach to the fight against trafficking of illicit drugs.

Religious radicalization: The promotion of certain interpretations of Islam, alien to the region and especially conservative, can increase tensions between religious groups, society, and the State. The various interpretations put specific emphasis of what should be 'proper' behaviour for women. Education, communication campaigns and responses should integrate women's perspectives.

Economic insecurity: The root causes of instability can be found in economic insecurity which results in massive migration, slavery and different kind of exploitation, including prostitution. In

Central Asia, there is an increasing trend of women migrating with men out of economic need, leaving their children in the care of orphanages. Another worrisome development is the migration of hundreds of thousands of men for economic reasons, mostly to Russia, leaving their wives and families behind for many years, sometimes without or with only scarce economic resources. In some countries this led also to an increase in polygamy. The different effects of economic insecurity have impacted women differently than men, with devastating ramifications on family and gender relations.

There is increasing concern about the rise of "anti-gender" movements and campaigns as well as attacks on organizations or protests against state laws promoting gender balance and equality in some participating States.

Discussions at the conference touched on all aspects of the implementation of the WPS Agenda and are summarized below

Conclusions

In terms of the issues related to the WPS agenda that deserve more focus, participants made the following conclusions and recommendations:

- In order for women to be able to play key roles in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, their skills as mediators and leaders should be enhanced. Working with mediators on peace agreements helps ensure that women are included not only as victims, but as agents of change. Strategies should be developed and adopted to work with mediators. For this, constant political and financial support and capacity building is required.

- Previous positive experience of women's participation and contribution to reconciliation processes at local, national and regional levels has to be studies and widely shared for further application.

- Equal access to justice is another important issue that needs further consideration and enhancement.

- There is a need to identify and further study common regional issues. For example, concerns were raised about changes of the security situation in Afghanistan in 2014 and a possible impact on Central Asia as a region. Opportunities should be seized for further considerations of a WPS regional approach in the South Caucasus. Regional organizations should consider developing strategic frameworks on how to work practically with implementation of commitments on WPS resulting from UNSCRs.

- The concept of«security» has to be considered in a context of human security and should include social, economic, political and military security, humanitarian and health security, human rights etc. The OSCE's comprehensive approach to address security concerns of both men and women in a cross-dimensional way should be considered as a role model for inclusive security. Demilitarization and disarmament issues have to be addressed from a gender perspective. Women's role and participation in Security Sector Reforms must be formalized, and the recruitment of women in the security system, especially as police officers, prioritized.

- More focus on domestic violence is needed. Issues of domestic violence should be included in discussions involving the formulation of the Post-2015 Agenda. Gender based violence has to be included in conflict analysis/post-conflict assessment in the context of human rights violations. It is important to effectively monitor gender based violence during cease-fire and include women as rapporteurs.

- A conducive environment has to be created to promote people to people diplomacy and joint contributions to peace processes particularly by women affected by conflicts.

- It is also important to focus on the needs of vulnerable populations, to include refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Future UNSCRs and OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions should consider protection issues and the needs of refugees, returnees, and IDPs.

- Women's economic empowerment should become a priority in order to provide alternative sources of livelihoods for women. Equal access to property rights and land inheritance in post conflict contexts should be agreed during mediation and in peace agreements. Overall, there is also a need to examine the effect of international arms trade on gender-based and sexual violence.

- The media should be supported to be able to enhance public awareness/recognition of the WPS agenda, and in promoting a language of peace, as well as addressing xenophobia/discrimination against vulnerable groups (migrants, etc.). They should also be encouraged to partnering with experts and human rights defenders to build tolerance and promote dialogue for peace.

The preparation of the 1325 NAP process provides impetus to implement the WPS agenda and is therefore an important exercise. However, for this to be successful, a number of conclusions were made by participants based on best practices for the preparation and implementation of the NAPs:

- High level political will and involvement is necessary. NAPs that are implemented need to get buy-in of policy makers in traditional security/defence establishments as leadership at the highest levels is necessary to support women. Public diplomacy from the top should be complemented with grass roots activism from bottom. Furthermore, States should ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to support the implementation of new laws and structural reforms that are usually required to implement the WPS agenda.

- Constant contributions are required from CSOs for the development, implementation and monitoring of NAPs. Women's peace activists, networks and NGOs who are active in gender and women's issues are extremely important advocates who should be involved in the NAP process due to their knowledge, connections, focus and dedication. Women from conflict situations also need to be involved. They can ensure that the objectives of the NAPs answer their real needs. Applying a gender perspective to conflict analysis can lay the foundation for future gender equality mechanisms.

- Designing and implementing the 1325 NAP requires robust knowledge of security concerns for both women and men, sex disaggregated data, analysis and advocacy strategy. A system of quantitative and qualitative indicators is necessary.

- NAPs should have realistic and clearly established goals and targets. NAPs can be comprehensive but the objectives need to be reachable, realistic, precise, simple and measurable to be effective. Too large and broad NAPs become a mere wish list, impossible to realize and operationalize. NAPs that are adequately budgeted, and for which proper monitoring and evaluation indicators have been developed, stand a better chance of realization. The focus should therefore not only be on the design of the action plan, but also on their implementation.

- Necessary financial resources have to be allocated for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NAPs. Budgeting by the government is key to mainstreaming the NAPs as part of the development priorities of the States. Although international organizations and donor countries may be able to support parts of a NAP, national budgeting increases national ownership and is an indication of the degree of importance that a State puts on the WPS agenda.

- Accountability and oversight mechanisms should be in place to support governmental and civil society in implementation of these commitments. Annual reports should be made accessible to the public, and regular evaluations properly planned.

3. Strategic Outlook

As we approach the 15th anniversary marking the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2015, it is important to take stock of regional, national and local efforts and the progress that has been made towards advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. In 2015, there will be a number of opportunities that need to be seized to promote WPS issues:

- A High Level Security Council review of the UNSCR 1325 implementation will allow for stocktaking.

- A new international Post-2015 Development Agenda will be launched, giving an opportunity for WPS issues to feature more prominently in development goals.

- The 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action will allow for more opportunities to consider neglected issues, such as protection issues and the needs of refugees, returnees, and IDPs.

- An OSCE implementation strategy on the promotion of gender equality that is under development should enhance the WPS agenda in the OSCE region.

Thus, these opportunities are expected to use further to measure a degree to which the lives and well-being of women and girls are protected and women's role and contribution to peace processes are ensured.