FACT SHEET

GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

Why is gender important to disarmament?

Men and women are differently affected by, and involved in, issues related to weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons (SALW), landmines and cluster munitions. Therefore, mainstreaming a gender perspective into disarmament policies is crucial.

There is wide recognition that the equal, full and effective participation of both men and women is vital to the maintenance of international peace and security. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution (SCR) 1325 (2000) and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, the world has witnessed an outpouring of efforts to engage women as agents of change in disarmament and arms control processes. This positive trend has been advanced by involving women directly affected by armed violence as well as initiating women-led policy initiatives.

In 2015, an independent review of implementation of SCR 1325 found that, despite a number of successes, many obstacles and challenges still persist in the full implementation of the WPS agenda.

Where is this perspective being addressed?

General Assembly (GA): GA resolution 65/69 (2010), and subsequent resolutions (67/48, 68/33, 69/61 and 71/56), recognize the contributions of women to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and encourage women’s participation in all decision-making processes.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW): In its preamble, the TPNW recognises the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men as essential for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security, including the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament. The TPNW also acknowledges the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls and calls on States parties to provide gender-sensitive victim assistance (article 6).

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT): The ATT includes a legally-binding provision related to gender-based violence (GBV) (article 7(4)). The risk of GBV thus forms an essential criterion in the export assessment that must precede the authorization of any export by States Parties of conventional weapons, ammunition and munitions, and parts and components within the scope of the ATT.

UN Programme of Action (PoA) on Small arms and light weapons: In the PoA preamble, States express grave concern over the devastating consequences of the illicit trade in small arms for, inter alia, women. In the outcome document of the Third Review Conference of States on the PoA (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3) held in June 2018, States agreed to promote the full participation and representation of women in mechanisms relating to the implementation of the PoA; take account of the differing impacts of the illicit trade in SALW on women, men, girls and boys in policy and programme designs; ensure coordination between national authorities responsible for the implementation of the PoA and the WPS agenda; and

GA Resolution 71/56 (2016) recognizes the “valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament measures …and in promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.”

SCR 1325 (2000) endorses the role of women in international peace and security, especially in decision-making and peace processes.

SCR 1820 (2008) recognizes that widespread and systematic sexual violence is a threat to international security.

SCR 2220 (2015) stresses the importance of women’s full and effective participation in all efforts to counter the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW, in line with resolution 1325 (2000).

SCR 2242 (2015) encourages the empowerment of women to participate in the design and implementation of efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW.
encourage the collection of data disaggregated by gender. In October 2017 the UN mechanism for Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) adopted the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) module on Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

**Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):** During the 2020 NPT Review Cycle, States parties have endorsed the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. States also welcomed the increased participation of women during the review cycle and highlighted the importance of actively supporting the participation of female delegates in their own delegations. The disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women was also noted.

**Security Council:** SCR 2117 (2013) urges Member States, UN entities, and intergovernmental, regional and sub-regional organizations to take further measures to facilitate women’s full and meaningful participation in all policymaking, planning and implementation processes to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW. This call was repeated by the Council in its most recent resolution on women, peace and security, SCR 2242 (2015). The Security Council took a further step in developing a gendered understanding of small arms control with the adoption of SCR 2220 (2015), which encourages Member States to strengthen the collection of sex disaggregated data to better understand the impact of illicit SALW on women. The resolution calls upon Member States, UN entities, intergovernmental and regional organizations to consider the impact of conflict and post-conflict environments on women’s security, as well as to mitigate the risk of women participating in the illicit transfer of SALW.

**Conference on Disarmament (CD):** The CD held two informal meetings on gender and disarmament, within the context of implementation of SCR 1325 (2000), in 2015 and 2016. The informal meetings addressed gender as an issue that cuts across all items on the Conference’s agenda, including those related to weapons of mass destruction.

**The Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament:** In May 2018, the Secretary-General launched his Disarmament Agenda, “Securing Our Common Future”, which prioritizes ensuring the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. The Agenda and its Implementation Plan also call for States to incorporate gender perspectives in the development of national legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control.

**The role for the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)**

UNODA, through implementation of its gender mainstreaming action plan (updated in 2016), furthers disarmament objectives through gender-sensitive programmes, activities and policies. Our goals include: exploring the linkages between the promotion of greater gender equity and disarmament; strengthening our capacity to incorporate gender perspectives into our work; undertaking advocacy on including gender perspectives in disarmament discussions; and supporting equitable participation in disarmament discussions.

In addition, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, has been a vocal advocate for strengthening the effective participation of women in disarmament and for increased recognition of the importance of gender considerations in disarmament discussions, including by publishing an op-ed for young women on the need for greater participation in disarmament, an op-ed on the relationship between arms control and gender-based violence in Latin America, and an op-ed on the need for gender to be at the heart of small arms policy. In 2018, the High Representative became an International Gender Champion. As such, the High Representative has taken a pledge not to sit on single-sex panels and has committed to strive to raise global awareness about the gendered impact of weapons and work to ensure the full participation of UNODA female staff in workshops, events, and activities.


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