



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security

Summary

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) first addressed the topic Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000, when it adopted the Resolution S/RES/1325(2000). This resolution addressed the necessity of including women as agents of peace and protecting their rights during and after conflict.

In these 20 years of international efforts to place gender equality at the forefront of conflict resolution and peace processes, the UNSC was able to reach consensus on the essential and effective role of women as mediators in conflicts. The same for the importance of having more women in peacekeeping operations (PKOs), bringing gender equality in both military and police staff. The UNSC has now been working on increasing the participation of women in economic and political processes in countries facing reconstruction.

In the African continent, especially in the Sahel area, currently the one most affected by conflicts and humanitarian crises, women have performed a fundamental role in preventing and solving conflicts. Women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution in the Sahel has been growing and there are many successful initiatives, such as women's situation rooms and women's early warning mechanisms.

With a focus on Africa and the Sahel region, this report will discuss the following challenges: the participation of women in PKOs and other peace processes; promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action; and preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

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Background

1. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted its Resolution S/RES/1325(2000), on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). It was the first time in the history of the UNSC that a resolution addressed the necessity of including women as agents of peace and protecting their rights during and after conflict¹.
2. From 2000 to 2015, the UNSC adopted eight resolutions under the topic WPS, divided into two groups. The first group of resolutions deals with women's active and effective participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The correspondent resolutions are: S/RES/1325 (2000), S/RES/1889 (2009), S/RES/2122 (2013) and S/RES/2242 (2015).
3. Under the scope of these resolutions, the UN and its Member States have made several efforts to include women as staff of the peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Currently, beyond the traditional ceasefire functions, PKOs are multidimensional and they include, for example, the respect for human rights; organization of elections; support for disarmament; humanitarian assistance; and the assistance for the reform of governmental institutions. For that, missions are composed of not only military, but also police and civilian personnel².
4. The first landmark in the implementation of the WPS agenda in the area of PKOs was in 2007, when India was the first country to deploy an all-female police unit to a peacekeeping mission, with 105 Indian policewomen working for the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)³.
5. In 2009, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as a preparation to the celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Resolution 1325, launched a campaign to increase the number of female peacekeepers to at least 10% in military units and 20% in police units by 2014⁴.
6. One important achievement of this campaign was in the year of 2013, when Bangladesh sent all-female police units to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The results proved to be positive, since other women and children tend to feel safer when they see women as peacekeepers. Following that, Bangladesh sent an all-female police unit to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)⁵.

¹ United Nations, Security Council, *Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security*, S/RES/1325(2000) (31 October 2000), available from [https://www.undocs.org/res/1325\(2000\)](https://www.undocs.org/res/1325(2000)).

² United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, *Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations*, (December 2003), available from https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping-handbook_un_dec2003_0.pdf.

³ United Nations Mission in Liberia, *Press Release*, UNMIL/PR/2203-18 (22 March 2018), available from https://unmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unmil-pr-2203-18-united_nations_peacekeeping_mission_in_liberia_completes_its_mandate_0.pdf.

⁴ United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Women in Peacekeeping", *Official website of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, (2019), available from <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>.

⁵ United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, "Female Bangladesh Police in Haiti: Making a Difference", *Official website of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti*, (2 April 2013), available from <https://minustah.unmissions.org/female-bangladeshi-police-haiti-making-difference>.

7. Despite these important achievements, the UN could not accomplish the Secretary-General's target for 2014. In that year, women were only 3% of military personnel and 10% of police personnel. It was particularly difficult to include women in PKO's senior ranks because female officers face greater barriers to move up from middle to higher positions⁶.

8. In 2014, the UN had its first female force commander in a PKO. Major General Kristin Lund, from Norway, was appointed to command the military forces in the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)⁷. Due to the success of her leadership in this mission, in 2018, another woman was appointed to lead the UNFICYP, Major General Cheryl Pearce, from Australia⁸.

9. Concerning the participation of women in peace processes, it comprehends their engagement in political, economic and social spheres. It also involves women participation in the negotiation of peace agreements; in mediation processes before, during and after conflicts; and other activities in peacebuilding.

10. The participation of women in peace agreements has increased in the past years. Between 1990 and 2000, only 11% of the peace agreements included at least one reference to women. Now, since the adoption of the Resolution 1325, 27% of the agreements have a reference to women. Besides, when the UN gives support to peace talks, the chance to include women in the agreements increases: in 2014, 67% of the peace agreements supported by the UN had provisions related to the WPS agenda⁹.

11. The inclusion of women in mediation support teams and the consultation with women's organizations have also increased since Resolution 1325. Peace processes with the UN engagement had 36% of gender expertise in 2011; 88% in 2013; and 67% in 2014. Consultation with women's organizations happened in 50% of all peace processes supported by the UN in 2011, increasing to 88% in 2014¹⁰.

12. Women play a fundamental role in political institutions in post-conflict situations. For example, in Zimbabwe, the new constitution recognized women's political rights. Due to this, the number of women occupying political seats in the country has increased from 17% in 2008 to 35% in 2013. Rwanda is another important example, since it is the country with

⁶ United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "Women in Peacekeeping", *Official website of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, (2019), available from <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>.

⁷ UN Women, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, (2015), available from http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, "Secretary-General appoints Major General Cheryl Pearce of Australia as force commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping force in Cyprus", *Official website of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus*, (8 November 2018), available from <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/secretary-general-appoints-major-general-cheryl-pearce-australia-force-commander-united-nations>.

⁹ UN Women, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, (2015), available from http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

¹⁰ Idem.

the highest number of women in Parliament worldwide. Women account for 63.8% of seats in the Lower House¹¹.

13. In South Sudan, women have an important role in mediating conflicts over natural resources. In 2015, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) implemented the project “Promoting Peace over Natural Resources” in Darfur and Kordofan. The project supported the inclusion of women elders in reconciliation committees in 24 villages, preventing local disputes over water from turning into a violent conflict¹².

14. In African countries, the implementation of the WPS agenda has been done through the National Action Plans (NAPs). The NAPs consist of a document that sets up the concrete strategies and programmes a government will take to meet its obligations under the WPS agenda. They are also important as a way for civil society to hold governments accountable, especially in countries that were severely affected by armed conflicts¹³.

15. In 2007, Côte d’Ivoire was the first post-conflict country to set up its NAP, followed in 2008 by Uganda and in 2009 by Liberia. In the 15th year anniversary of Resolution 1325, 54 countries had adopted a NAP, being 24 in Europe, 17 in Africa, 9 in Asia, 3 in the Americas and 1 in Oceania¹⁴.

16. The second group of resolutions adopted by the UNSC on the WPS agenda focuses on conflict-related sexual violence and the protection of women and children from sexual violence during armed conflict. The resolutions are: S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010) and S/RES/2106 (2013). Especially in this last resolution, the UNSC affirmed that sexual violence used as a tactic weapon in armed conflicts is a war crime.

17. In the 1990s, there were allegations of sexual harassment against women perpetrated by UN peacekeepers in Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was only in 2003 that the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced a zero tolerance policy to cases of sexual harassment among peacekeepers¹⁵.

18. In 2005, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations created the Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT), responsible for training peacekeepers to prevent sexual abuse and

¹¹ UN Women, *Women’s Leadership and Political Participation*, UN Women in Brief, (2013), available from <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20wome nlgthebriefuswebrev2%20pdf.ashx>.

¹² United Nations Environment Programme, “Empowering Sudan’s women and promoting peace through equitable use of natural resources”, *Official website of the United Nations Environment Programme*, (7 February 2019), available from <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/empowering-sudans-women-and-promoting-peace-through-equitable-use-natural>.

¹³ UN Women, *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, (2015), available from http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf.

¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁵ United Nations, “Addressing sexual exploitation and abuse”, *Official website of the Conduct in UN Field Missions*, (2019), available from <https://conduct.unmissions.org/addressing>.

exploitation. The CDT was also responsible for conducting investigations and giving appropriate assistance to victims¹⁶.

19. In 2015, there were serious allegations of sexual violence perpetrated by non-UN foreign forces in the Central African Republic. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon created an independent panel to propose measures to deal with the case and to recommend reforms to deter sexual exploitation and abuse. Following the panel recommendations, in 2016, the Secretary-General appointed the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation. The Special Coordinator has the mandate to create and implement the UN system-wide response against sexual exploitation and abuse¹⁷.

20. Data revealed that when women are at the frontlines of the security sector, they contribute to the security of other women. The increasing number of women as military and police officers resulted in the reduction of sexual and gender-based violence and in an increase of women's confidence to report sexual exploitation and abuse¹⁸.

21. With the support of UN Women and the International Peace Support Training Center, Kenya was the headquarters of the fifth edition of the Female Military Officers Course in 2016. The course encourages the employment of women in armed forces. In Kenya, women compose 19 per cent of Kenyan peacekeeping troops and military experts¹⁹.

Potential challenges, problems, issues the Council should address

The participation of women in peace processes

22. One of the main objectives of the WPS agenda is including women in the decision-making of peace agreements, in peacekeeping operations and in the peacebuilding process. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, adopted by the UNSC in 2013, envisages enhancing women participation in political parties of Sahelian countries, as a way to stimulate peaceful politics. The participation of women as part of peacebuilding efforts in the Sahel is also mentioned in the 2018 UN Support Plan for the Sahel.

23. Unfortunately, peace processes are male-dominated and despite of the efforts made since 2000, women remain underrepresented in these areas. In the period of 1990-2017, women were only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators and 5% of witnesses and signatories in peace processes. As a consequence of this underrepresentation, the language of peace

¹⁶ Idem.

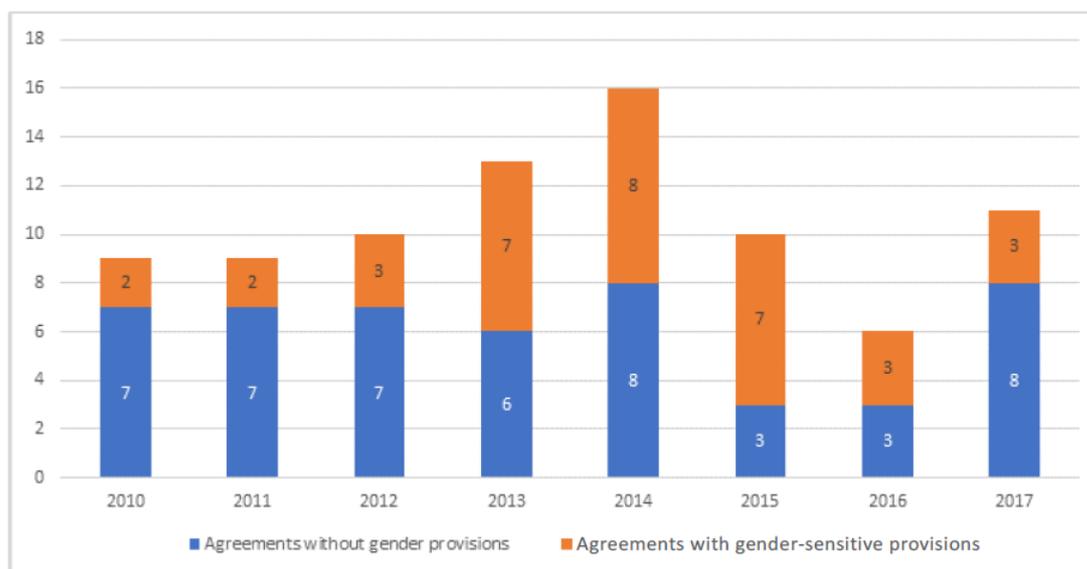
¹⁷ Idem.

¹⁸ United Nations, "Deployment of Female Personnel Boosts Effectiveness, Says Secretary-General, as Security Council Holds Open Debate on Women in Peacekeeping", *UN News*, (11 April 2019), available from <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13773.doc.htm>.

¹⁹ UN Women, "Training in Kenya boosts deployment of female military officers for peacekeeping", *Official website of the UN Women*, (14 December 2016), available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/12/training-in-kenya-boosts-deployment-of-female-military-officers-for-peacekeeping>.

agreements usually are not gender sensitive. In 2017, only 3 out of 11 agreements contained gender provisions, as showed in Figure 1²⁰.

Figure 1 - Number of peace agreements signed, with and without gender provisions (2010–2017)



Source: Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/900

24. In Africa, women have been taking part in Early Warning Initiatives, which are civil groups responsible for noting the rising of tensions or the possibility of an armed conflict and warning United Nations Officers to take preventive action before it happens. In some cases, the participation of women in these initiatives is mainly symbolic, since they lack preparation, representativeness, and follow-up²¹.

25. Participation of women in peacekeeping operations has increased, but mainly in lower ranks. In 2016, women composed only 23% of senior-level staff and 23% of leadership in peacekeeping operations, still far from the goal of gender equality at all levels of the UN staff. In the same year, 23 full-time gender advisers were deployed in 8 out of 12 field-based missions led by the Department of Political Affairs, and two gender advisors were appointed as Special Envoys of the Secretary General. These figures show the efforts of the UN in mainstreaming the gender perspective into peacekeeping missions²².

26. Concerning the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts, there is a lack of gender inclusiveness in political affairs. In conflict and post-conflict countries, the global proportion of women occupying parliamentary seats is only 16%. In the Sahel region, the numbers are

²⁰ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/900 (9 October 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/900>.

²¹ United Nations, Security Council, *Concept paper for the open debate of the Security Council on the theme “The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa”*, S/2016/219 (8 March 2016) available from <https://undocs.org/S/2016/219>.

²² United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/861 (16 October 2017), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

also low: in Liberia, only 2 of the 19 ministers are women; in Sierra Leone, the percentage of women in parliamentary seats is 12.8%; and in a local election in Guinea in 2018, only 20% of candidates were women²³.

27. In some African countries, the use of legislative quotas has increased the participation of women in politics. In Somalia, the use of a temporary quota in 2016, defining that women should occupy 30% seats in the House of People, allowed to increase representation from 14% in 2012 to 24.4% in 2016²⁴.

28. Violence during elections are very common in the African continent, due to social conflicts or cases of fraud. Women are constantly the targets of political violence during elections. In order to address this challenge, the UNSC has supported the creation of Women's Situation Rooms (WSR). The WSR are groups of women empowered to be leaders in the election processes. They work within communities by mediating and intervening in tense or even violent situations that may arise during elections²⁵.

29. Since 2009, UN Women and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) have supported WSR by offering training on mediation and resolution of conflict and facilitating the sharing of knowledge between different groups. The project was firstly implemented in Liberia, and due to its success, it has been replicated in Kenya, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The main challenge is that women participants in WSR still lack training and usually the rooms are deployed too late in the election process, reducing their chances of success²⁶.

Promoting gender equality in humanitarian action

30. Humanitarian assistance encompasses actions to guarantee access to education, food, health care, water, hygiene, sanitation, housing, and other resources to population affected by conflicts or disasters. In 2018, around 136 million people required humanitarian assistance, and over 75% of them were women and children. Among them, approximately 34 million women are in reproductive age and 5 million are young women, pregnant women and girls²⁷.

31. In humanitarian crises, women are more inclined to suffer from hunger than men do. In many communities, women receive less food than men do because they have a lower status. In many displaced persons and refugee camps, the register to receive humanitarian assistance

²³ United Nations, Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/649 (29 June 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/649>.

²⁴ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/861 (16 October 2017), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

²⁵ United Nations, Security Council, *Concept paper for the open debate of the Security Council on the theme "The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa"*, S/2016/219 (8 March 2016) available from <https://undocs.org/S/2016/219>.

²⁶ *Idem*.

²⁷ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/900 (9 October 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/900>.

is done by the male heads of families, and this increases disparities between men and women when it comes to the access to food²⁸.

32. The lack of health services in humanitarian settings also affects women and girls' rights. In 2015, 61% of maternal deaths globally happened in 35 countries affected by situations of emergency or conflict. Child, early and forced marriage is also a worrisome problem in countries affected by humanitarian crises, since it is a response to the lack of resources and security of many families. Nine from 10 countries with the highest rate of child marriage are fragile states, and 90% of early first births happen with child brides²⁹. In the Sahel region, the average age at first marriage is 16 years old and only 45% of births are attended by qualified personnel³⁰.

33. Less than 2.7% of humanitarian funding is destined to education, and there is a clear gender gap in women and girls' access to education in humanitarian settings. During conflicts, girls are 2.5 times more prone to be out of school than in non-conflict situations³¹. In the Sahel region, 59% of girls between 15-24 years old are illiterate. Access to education helps protecting women and girls from child, early and forced marriage and from violence and human trafficking³².

Gender approach to address violent extremism and terrorism

63. Women and girls are the most affected by the attacks of extremist and terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram. These groups usually perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls (including forced marriage, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery and human trafficking) by promising sex and marriage as a way to recruit men and boys³³.

64. At the same time, women have increasingly been recruited by terrorist groups to work at ideological and operational levels. Estimated figures show that women are approximately 20% to 30% of foreign terrorist fighters, including suicide bombers³⁴.

²⁸ United Nations Population Fund, "10 things you should know about women & the world's humanitarian crises", *Official website of the United Nations Population Fund*, (23 May 2016), available from <https://www.unfpa.org/news/10-things-you-should-know-about-women-world%E2%80%99s-humanitarian-crises>.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ United Nations Population Fund, *Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)*, (7 June 2016), available from https://wcaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SWEDD_ENG.pdf.

³¹ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/861 (16 October 2017), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

³² United Nations Population Fund, *Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)*, (7 June 2016), available from https://wcaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SWEDD_ENG.pdf.

³³ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/900, (9 October 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/900>.

³⁴ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/861, (16 October 2017), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

65. Boko Haram continues to be the terrorist group that most affects the Sahel region. In 2018, Boko Haram was responsible for more than 90 attacks³⁵, and in the Lake Chad Basin (that includes parts of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria), “(...) almost one of every five suicide bombers is a child and three quarters of all child suicide bombers are girls”³⁶. The kidnapping and abduction of women and girls are also common: in February 2018, Boko Haram kidnapped 112 schoolgirls from the town of Dapchi, Yobe State, Nigeria³⁷.

66. This situation urgently requires gender-sensitive approaches to address violent extremism and terrorism in order to protect the human rights of women and girls. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), together with the Government of Chad, has created a center to help women and girls that have faced gender-based violence perpetrated by Boko Haram. The center works in finding survivors and offers them health care, social and legal support and educational sessions. The center also uses female religious leaders to counter narratives of violent extremism³⁸.

67. On 10 and 11 April of 2018, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) co-hosted with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the High-level Event on Women, Violence and Terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel. Participants adopted the Dakar Call for Action, a document with actions to fully include women in initiatives on preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism³⁹.

Recommendations and suggestions, priorities for future action

68. The first recommendation is to continue ensuring gender equality and integrating the WPS agenda in all stages of UN peacekeeping missions. The UNSC needs to guarantee gender balance in the military, police and civil staff of peace operations, especially in leadership positions. Besides, it is important to guarantee that the mandates of all peacekeeping operations include a gender approach.

69. The second recommendation is to guarantee the effective participation of women in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. It is necessary to increase the number of gender experts in all UN Mediation Teams and to create formal mechanisms to fully integrate women in peace talks. It is also required to develop better training so more women can have the skills to deal with the technical aspects of peace agreements, such as monitoring and implementation of ceasefires. With that, the UNSC will be able to raise awareness of peace negotiators to the gender dimension of peace talks.

³⁵ United Nations, Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/649 (29 June 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/649>.

³⁶ United Nations, Security Council, *Women, peace and security*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2017/861 (16 October 2017), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

³⁷ Idem.

³⁸ United Nations Population Fund, “From human bomb to paralegal, Boko Haram survivor helps heal her community”, *Official website of the United Nations Population Fund*, (9 August 2018), available from <https://www.unfpa.org/news/human-bomb-paralegal-boko-haram-survivor-helps-heal-her-community>.

³⁹ United Nations, Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/649 (29 June 2018), available from <https://undocs.org/S/2018/649>.

70. The third recommendation is calling upon all UN Member States to establish its own National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. Especially in Africa and in the Sahel region, NAPs should include provisions to strengthen Women's Situation Rooms (WSR) by providing training to participants. NAPs in the Sahel region should also include provisions to increasing the number of women in leadership positions in all spheres, as envisaged in the 2018 UN Support Plan for the Sahel⁴⁰.

71. The fourth recommendation is promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls in humanitarian action. Firstly, the UN needs to improve its consultation process, so women can have a voice in humanitarian assistance, especially when it comes to food distribution, health care, education and violence prevention. Secondly, in the Sahel, humanitarian work must go beyond short-term assistance and be integrated with a long-term peaceful development strategy, with a focus on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The process of reconstruction must include women in political parties and institutions and give them access to economic resources. This is the only way to guarantee women and girls essential rights, such as education, health, employment and financing.

72. The fifth recommendation is to insert a gender-perspective in all efforts made to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism. Rehabilitation programmes are needed to give support to women and girls victims of violent extremism and terrorism. It is also important to increase the number of female religious leaders engaged in preventive actions to counter narratives of violent extremism. Finally, it is required to build infrastructure and strengthen institutions, including educational and multicultural dialogues.

Further reading

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⁴⁰ United Nations, *UN Support Plan for the Sahel*, (May 2018), available from https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sites/www.un.org.africarenewal/files/English%20Summary%20Report_0.pdf.

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