

The following statement is prepared by the Australian Section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) as input for the WomenSpeak consortium in preparation for CSW 2008

Equality of participation for women in all aspects of peace processes worldwide has been on the agenda at the United Nations since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action defined the need to "increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels" (Strategic Objective E.1). Strategic Objective E.1 also urged governments and other international actors to integrate gender analyses and perspectives into their processes for the resolution of armed conflict and for post-conflict peace-building. Regularly in UN debate since then Australia has publicly stated support on the part of the Australian Government for Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 and for increased involvement of women in all aspects of the peace process.

For instance, in Australia's statement to the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Thursday 4 March 2004, Ms Kerry Flanagan (First Assistant Secretary, Office of the Status of Women) said that the Australian Government "[was] strongly committed to the increased participation of women in all peace processes". Ms Flanagan went on to say that Australia had "actively supported post-conflict peace-building programs in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville". Ms Flanagan also referred to Australia's earlier statement to the UN on the third anniversary of the adoption of SCR 1325, when Australia called for "enhanced efforts by all member states and the international community to achieve real improvements for women".

More recently on the sixth anniversary of SCR 1325, October 2006, Ambassador Robert Hill in his statement to the UN Security Council Open Debate: *Women, Peace and Security*, said that: "Australia recognises the critical role women play in peace and security" and that "Australia strongly supports SCR 1325".

Despite these very fine and welcome statements from the Australian Government, Australia's implementation of SCR 1325 still has a very, very long way to go. WILPF believes that in addition to theoretical statements at the UN, genuine practical measures are necessary if gender perspectives in peace agreements are to be truly enhanced. We need deeds not just words.

WILPF believes that debate around SCR 1325 has become increasingly framed in a very narrow and distorted way and that the Australian Government has shared in this. WILPF believes that SCR 1325 has been constrained by some Governments (including the Australian Government) to their own limited agenda. For instance, in his statement to the UN SC Open Debate: *Women, Peace and Security*, October 2006, Robert Hill said that: "Australia has an ongoing program of training for personnel within the Australian Defence Forces and military personnel from other countries in the Asia Pacific region" and that "we actively engage women in our peace-building efforts - women military, police and civilian personnel play a key role in our assistance to UN peacekeeping missions and bilateral and regional endeavours such as the Regional Assistance Mission

to the Solomon Islands”. Increased participation by women in peacekeeping and policing operations, while it in and of itself welcomed by many women, is not the primary emphasis of SCR 1325. Women’s participation in the peace process must be viewed more broadly than that. Skewing the debate around increased participation for women in the military and emphasising women’s participation in the military and policing at the expense of other measures betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of SCR 1325, which in our view needs to be more about policy-making decisions which can be taken by governments in order to *prevent* war and all forms of violent conflict. To truly implement SCR 1325, we must look again at the full anti-militarism and peace-building agenda that inspired the adoption of SCR 1325 in the first place.

We believe that what is required is a restructuring of government priorities and policies to reflect the needs of women and to benefit all of society. WILPF believes that women’s participation in the peace process can be seen as a barometer of a society’s wider ability to deal with conflict in a non-violent manner and to build a society in which violent conflict can be averted.

WILPF believes that the best way to ensure peace and security is to promote women’s role in all aspects of the peace processes and thus to provide for basic human needs. In short, prevention is better (and cheaper) than “cure”. Thus, Government budgets need to provide for adequate housing, healthcare, food, welfare, employment and a clean environment, rather than relentlessly increasing spending on military expenditures.

In her paper delivered to the WILPF (Australia) National Meeting in May 2006, Professor Rhonda Sharp said that:

“ ... gender budget analysis flies in the face of the conventional approach where governments identify defence allocations in their budget as the primary contributor to peace and security. In Australia the federal government allocated the same amount for health as it did to defence in 2004/05 (\$14.3B or 7.4% of total expenditure). In 2006/07 an extra \$908m is allocated to defence with an extra \$15.9B planned for defence and national security between 2008 and 2015. In contrast, health, including health research, was allocated an extra \$3.3B over 5 years. With new defence expenditures being 5 times greater than health, the 2006/07 budget reveals its priorities lie with defence.”

Professor Sharp also pointed out that although Australia was the first country in the world to seek to mainstream gender issues into government budgets, in recent years, successive federal budgets have failed to disclose the gender impacts of all government expenditures, not just those specifically targeted to women and girls. These, she said, are “important in assessing wellbeing and progress to gender equality”. The Howard Government also cut resources for women’s policy advice and consultation. When the Office for the Status of Women (OSW) was moved out of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2004, the ministerial

budget statement of the budget's impact on women was no longer provided. Thus, in Professor Sharp's words, Australia is now "an international laggard in gender-responsive budgeting".

Women in the Pacific Region

In addition, it is our observation that the Australian Government has dealt with gender issues in post-conflict situations in the Pacific region where our armed forces have been actively engaged in what can best be described as an *ad hoc* and minimalist manner. As there are now gender advisors in most multi-dimensional peace support operations, one might expect of a state claiming to support SCR 1325 that Australia's regional missions would likewise incorporate gender advisors, however we observe that RAMSI had/ has no such advisors.

Indeed, numerous opportunities have presented themselves in recent years in relation for instance to the East Timor Force and the Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI) where the Australian Government could have taken a leading role in the implementation of SCR 1325, however these opportunities were not taken up by the Australian Government.

In fact, in the Solomon Islands, the women were actively prevented by RAMSI personnel from engaging in the formal peace process. The Solomon Islands women felt that they had been forgotten. They said:

"In the case of RAMSI not allowing the women to go in parliament, especially for women from the National Council of Women (NCW) not to be allowed to go in, is very surprising because NCW is the focal point for the women of Solomon Islands, and they are a very important organisation that represents the voices of women, and they are supposed to be in the frontline of brokering peace. Maybe RAMSI or whoever gave the order, did not know what importance women of Solomon Islands had and will always have in any peace negotiations or resolving conflicts."

While it is possible that the RAMSI personnel by their actions were attempting according to their own lights to "protect" the Solomon Islands women, it is important nevertheless to understand that at the height of the original "ethnic tensions", it was the women who crossed borders between the conflicting parties, to talk to their children, on both sides of the conflict. It was their negotiations between conflicting parties that brought about peace. It has been doubly disappointing for them that when peace finally came that they were excluded from the formal processes.

The women of Bougainville were similarly involved in instigating peace processes in their province and have similarly been left out since.

Australia's Overseas Aid Program

In his statement to the SC, HE Robert Hill said that:

“We will continue to find tangible ways through our aid program ... to implement SCR 1325.”

Implementing SC 1325 will indeed enhance the effectiveness of Australia's Overseas Aid Program. In many of the societies in our region, women are the backbone of their communities. An aid program that does not address their needs or include their ideas is not going to lead to balanced outcomes.

In studying Australia's Overseas Aid Program, particularly in those countries that have suffered violent conflicts, WILPF can see little evidence of SCR 1325 being put into practice through the aid program. According to the OfW (formerly OSW) website in 2006, the Overseas Aid Program allocated an unspecified amount to the Vanuatu's Women's Centre Committee on Violence against Women and continued to fund the Fiji's Women's Crisis Centre. These were comparatively small initiatives. It is our sincere hope that the recent White Paper on Australia's Overseas Aid Program which stresses that greater emphasis will be put on the effectiveness of the aid program does indeed reflect future realities.

Conclusion

There is certainly little evidence that any effort is being made to include women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. Women are still under-represented in decision-making, particularly within the security sector. Yet women bring special skills and abilities to build a culture of peace; in almost all cultures, women are peace educators both within families and in the broader society. Tangible ways must be found to ensure more women are empowered politically and economically, in order to be represented adequately at all levels of decision-making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. As Elisabeth Porter emphasises:

“Despite the significance of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, women remain absent or are marginalised from negotiating tables, political decision-making opportunities and senior advisory positions. Inclusion matters. Without plural inclusivity, there is no peace with justice and equality...”¹

Or in Cora Weiss's words, “No women, no peace”.

WILPF therefore recommends that:

1. The Australian Government develop a SCR 1325 Action Plan similar to Norwegian and UK Government Action Plans emphasising the involvement of civil society. This would build on the work already done by the Office for Women.

2. The Australian Government adopt the SCR 1325 *Women's Participation and Gender Perspectives in Security Council Resolutions* Checklist developed during a Roundtable in January 2004 at the Rockefeller Foundation, entitled "Towards International Peace and Human Security: Advancing Prevention, Participation and Protection in the Work of the Security Council." The Roundtable was co-hosted by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, the Permanent Missions to the UN of Canada, Chile and the United Kingdom.

(This conceptual framework was developed by the NGO working Group to encourage better integration of the five thematic resolutions – Res.1266 and 1296 on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; 1366 on Prevention of Armed Conflict; 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; and 1460 on Children in Armed Conflict) in advancing peace and human security in all the Security Council's work. Copy available at: <http://www.womenpeacecurity.org/>

3. The Australian Government reinstate mainstreamed gender impact statements in Australian Government budgets.

4. Australia's Overseas Aid Program provide greater assistance to women.

5. The Federal Government adopt a format that ensures that all decision-making and peace negotiation teams should comprise at least 40% women and 40% men with a maximum 60% of either sex, and that these personnel be trained on how to mainstream gender.

6. Every individual, female or male, civilian or military, who is deployed in peace operations have at least three days' training in planning, programs and policies from a gender perspective.

7. In all peace keeping operations and post-conflict peace-building, the Australian Government ensure that women as well as men are consulted and listened to right from the pre-planning stage of post-conflict operations, and every step of the way. The Australian Government needs to develop procedures that will ensure women are fully included, without discrimination, as decision-makers, holders of leadership positions, beneficiaries of services and resources, and as personnel at all levels - including the most senior posts.

8. The Australian Government train a pool of women in leadership and negotiation skills.

9. The Australian Government include women's NGOs - international and from the conflict zones - in the planning, preparation and simulation exercises ahead of deployment for peace operations.

10. In all contracts tendered, the Australian Government call for gender to be part of contract compliance. For instance, as a model, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has a system whereby any contractor applying for funds has to demonstrate how gender perspectives will be integrated throughout their program, and gender is included in the monitoring and evaluation of the program.

11. The Australian Government recognise that many women who have not been to university are well qualified for responsible posts often bringing more real life experience than those more formally qualified. For instance, as a model, the British Civil Service modernised their recruitment and promotion policies a few years ago - their ads now call for 'university degree *or demonstrable appropriate experience.*'

12. The Australian Government return the Office for the Status of Women to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Notes

1. Elisabeth Porter in "Women and security: You cannot dance if you cannot stand", first published on openDemocracy under a creative Commons Licence, at:
http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-resolution_1325/dance_2937.jsp

2. For many of the recommendations we are indebted to the article by Lesley Abdela entitled "1325: deeds not words". The full document on WILPF (Australia)'s 1325 website at: <http://www.1325Australia.org.au/html/LAbdela.html>

3. Professor Rhonda Sharp's address to the WILPF (Australia) National Meeting, May 2006 is available at: <http://www.sapo.org.au/pub/pub5343.html>