Women Major Group's contribution for the 8th session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals *Conflict Prevention, Post-conflict Peace building and Promotion of Durable Peace and Rule of Law and Governance*

Analysis and key recommendations by the Women's Major Group

Peace is the basis for sustainable development. Living in a conflict-free society with enduring peace is a fundamental human right. Just and sustainable peace represents not just the absence of war but also the elimination of all forms of violence – including sexual and gender-based violence – at the level of the household, community, society and state. Persistent conflict reverses development and hinders good governance. In times of instability, women suffer from increased gender-based and other forms of violence, and face particular obstacles to their full and meaningful participation and access to rights. The gaps in progress attained under MDGs in conflict-affected countries are significant. While civil/communal conflicts impact on daily human life, intra-state and inter-state conflicts result in humanitarian crises, insecurity, human rights violations, and loss of livelihoods which particularly affect refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants. Investing in women's equal participation and rights is critical to conflict prevention, sustainable development and peace.

### 1.	Ensuring Peace and Freedom from Conflict

The Women's Major Group stands for peace, not war. The WMG traces its position through women's anti-slavery and anti-war movements in Europe and USA in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's involvement in anti-imperialist and liberation struggles across the global South, women's role in anti-nuclear, anti-Vietnam and civil rights protests in the 1960s and 1970s, and women's more recent activism on the UN Security Council Resolutions on 'Women, Peace and Security'.

The SDG Post-2015 agenda must address the root causes of violence and conflict. Present-day approaches to national and international security prioritize increased spending on militaries and armaments at the expense of sustainable development, and not only fail to reduce conflict but rather increase injustice, inequality and violence. The main drivers of conflict and instability today, such as growing inequalities, increased food and fuel prices, land-grabbing, climate change related to natural disasters etc., cannot be addressed with weapons. Armed conflict also negatively affects the environment, often impeding the use of land and water by poisoning natural resources or physically blocking access to resources.

Across conflict situations, including communities and camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, women face particular and disproportionate risks ranging from rape and other forms of gender-based violence, food insecurity and inadequate health care (including sexual and reproductive health) as a result of unequal rights and access to training, credit, land, technologies, and other forms of support.

Excessive national and global investment in war, militaries and weapons not only exacerbates violence and environmental exploitation, but also drains resources for gender equality and social development. The statistics are staggering. Global military spending was over US$1.75 trillion in 2012 (SIPRI). The scale of this military expenditure is equivalent to 700 years of the United Nations' regular budget, just a fraction of which is needed to effectively finance the MDGs. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research institute, the 15 countries with the highest military expenditure globally in 2012 were: *USA, China, Russia, UK, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, Italy, Brazil, South Korea, Australia, Canada and Turkey*, spending almost US$1,500 billion per year in total, representing over 80% of global military spending. Compare the annual military spending of the top 15 countries to the estimated US$4 billion needed each year to put every child in the world in primary school, or the US$18.7 billion needed for every person in the world to have basic access to safe water and sanitation.

The SDGs need to address the link between economic activities such as mining and large scale biomass to increased violence and conflict, as communities lose access to livelihood resources, are violently evicted from their lands and suffer negative impacts from the pollution of water and other resources.

The SDG Post-2015 framework must address the root causes of conflict:

1. Ensure global agreement on the reallocation of military spending to gender-equitable social development.
2. Set a target to reduce military spending by at least 50% by 2030 for the 15 biggest military spenders (USA, China, Russia, UK, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, Italy, Brazil, South Korea, Australia, Canada and Turkey) and by 30% for all other countries and reallocate these resources to gender equitable sustainable development.
3. Develop international response mechanisms to address land-grabbing and low intensity conflicts, by instituting feedback mechanisms from grassroots women's groups and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs).
4. Ensure that all investors comply with CEDAW and UNDRIP, which support women's and indigenous peoples' full, meaningful and ongoing participation and rights in government and other negotiating processes.
5. Set gender-equitable human rights and environmental criteria for all corporations, private military and security companies, and track and hold accountable the transnational corporations involved in economic activities that increase conflict.
6. Set criteria to ensure that Bretton Woods Institutions and public pension funds do not invest in, fund or support activities that cause or increase conflict and human rights including gender-based violations.
7. Ensure that women and girls benefit equitably from economic and development investment and grant funding programmes, and that specific resources are allocated to local and community-based civil society initiatives promoting gender equality and women's role in conflict resolution.

2.   Ensuring Gender-equitable Conflict Resolution

The Women's Major Group validates UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).[1] UNSCR 1325, adopted by Member States to integrate a gender perspective in all policies, plans and programs related to peace and security, and empower citizens to hold governments accountable to their commitments to involve women and girls in all phases of the peace process. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda recognizes women's empowerment and gender equality in public, political, economic and social life as strongly associated with building sustainable peace, the rule of law and good governance.

However, women continue to be marginalized from international decision-making on peace and war. The results from a study by UN Women of 31 major peace processes from 1992-2011 indicate that only 2.4% of chief mediators and 9% of negotiating delegation participants were women. In Syria, despite women's leadership in the uprising, the Geneva II peace negotiations began with the token presence of women. In the 30-year conflict in Colombia, women have been almost completely excluded from the peace talks, a situation that has begun to change only in the past year. This inadequate inclusion of women reduces opportunities to address the concerns of critical stakeholders, and makes the implementation of peace agreements and post-conflict development more likely to fail.

Involving women in peacebuilding efforts is a key to success. The Women's League of Burma that worked in conjunction with Shan Women's Action Network and Karen Women's Organization to restore law and order in Myanmar is a clear example of this strategy. Rwandan women were key leaders in the peacebuilding process, and today women occupy over half the elected seats in the Rwandan parliament, which has contributed to the enduring peace and the prevention of a relapse into conflict. Engagement of Ivory Coast women in law enforcement has resulted in the establishment of the first all-female UN Peacekeeping Unit.

The Women's Major Group calls for a SDG Post-2015 agenda which stands for peace and an end to war. The SDG Post-2015 framework must:
1. Promote peace, and not accept war and conflict as a given.
2. Ensure that the goal of conflict prevention and peacebuilding should advance human security based on women's full and equal participation and rights throughout the conflict and peace spectrum.
3. Build on international human rights and humanitarian law and use existing commitments, targets and indicators, in particular:
   - The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda including UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122, as well as the (2010) WPS Global Indicators and Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on sexual violence;
   - CEDAW General Recommendation #30 on 'women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations';
   - The Beijing Platform for Action, Area E on 'women in armed conflict'; and
   - The UN's 7-Point Action Plan for Gender-responsive Peacebuilding.
4. Ensure that a critical mass of women are included in mainstream decision-making in the UN Security Council, all peace negotiations within and between countries in conflict, post-conflict decision-making bodies, etc.

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[1]   The 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) Agenda of the UN Security Council was initiated with UNSCR 1325 (2000) which provided historic recognition of the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; the under-valued and under-utilized contributions that women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding; and the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents of peace and security. The WPS Agenda now comprises seven resolutions: UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2122 (2013) as well as accountability mechanisms including the (2010) WPS Global Indicators.

5. Support meaningful women-led civil society engagement in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding processes from the outset and in an on-going manner.
6. Address reductive binaries and stereotypes which are often early warning signals to conflict, e.g., the 'war on terror' used reductive binaries and stereotypes thus creating enemies of the 'other', e.g., good *vs.* evil, civilized *vs.* barbaric, rational *vs.* irrational, progressive *vs.* backward to characterize specific societies, thus making war and military interventions possible and even necessary.
7. Set criteria and targets to ensure the engagement of local women's NGOs and integration of gender considerations in all peace negotiations, peace agreements and implementation processes.
8. Mainstream gender equality in all conflict prevention efforts including by increasing women's appointments as mediators and setting criteria to ensure women's full and equal participation, rights, and concerns in the formulation of post-conflict repatriation and resettlement plans, as well as demobilization, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction programmes.
9. Establish special initiatives to ensure that the security concerns and livelihood needs of war widows and other female heads of household are adequately addressed.
10. Support medical and humanitarian aid which addresses the particular needs of displaced women, integrates gender-sensitive training and camp design for humanitarian aid actors, and ensures women's participation in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of all humanitarian programs including aid distribution and refugee camp management.

3. Ensuring Gender-equitable Rule of Law

As women build peace through gender-equitable processes and institutions, they build justice mechanisms that protect and empower women, including training for female law enforcement and medical professionals. At the same time, increased women's participation and integration of gender considerations also protects and empowers men. Data from 39 countries show that the presence of female police officers correlates directly with an increase in the reporting of sexual assaults and other forms of gender-based violence to law enforcement authorities. However, women currently comprise only 9% of the police and 27% of judges worldwide. Women's participation in prosecution, sentencing, restitution measures and ex-offender reintegration is essential to building secure societies and enable men to engage in the non-violent and sustainable development of their communities.

The SDG Post-2015 framework must ensure the rule of law:
1. Ensure the rule of law to address impunity and gender-based violations in conflict situations – particularly regarding sexual and other forms of gender-based violence – and develop indicators to hold governments accountable to democratic and inclusive governance in situations of conflict, transition and post-conflict reconstruction.
2. Ensure that 30% minimum targets for women are achieved whilst aiming at parity at all levels of: global, national and local governance; executive, legislative and judicial positions; public administration and law enforcement.
3. Enforce international humanitarian and human rights law, and strengthen accountability mechanisms including legal prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
4. Integrate human rights, gender equality, and conflict prevention and resolution into education curricula, and training for peacekeeping, justice and security sector reform personnel, to promote a culture of peace.
5. Amend all gender-discriminatory and punitive laws against women and people with different sexual orientation, including transgender people, which put them at greater risk of social stigma and violence by the police and the wider society.