



Cc Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs Bob Carr

Dear Hon. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

We would like to extend our congratulations on your successful bid to the leadership of the Australian Labour Party.

As a network of women led civil society and academics, we have a strong interest in the role of the Australian government in the domestic and international advancement of women's rights, disarmament, human rights, and peace and security. In particular, we have engaged with interest in the Australian non-permanent seat on UN Security Council and the Australian responses to the Women Peace and Security Agenda.

We recognise the Australian government's strong commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and that this commitment was leveraged as part of the government's successful bid for a non-permanent seat. We also recognise that this important opportunity to shape international responses to peace and security within the UN system has come to fruition in large due to your leadership on the ultimately successful bid.

We warmly welcomed the announcement by Senator Bob Carr on 26 June 2013 that Australia will hold a thematic focus on "the Role of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding" during the presidency of the Security Council in September. This announcement has been particularly well received, as within civil society and academia there have been expressed concerns that certain aspects of the Women Peace and Security agenda are emphasised (such as preventing sexual violence) over others (such as women's leadership, and participation in formal peace processes). Australia's announcement of a thematic focus on women's agency in post-conflict reconstructions and peacebuilding is a much needed positive step towards a more holistic approach, and one which we strongly encourage the Australian government under your leadership to continue advancing.

The need for a repositioning of the holistic intention of the WPS agenda cannot be overstated. Analysis by WILPF's PeaceWomen project has found that when dealing with country-situations the Security Council has been inconsistent, and to date there is no country-situation resolution that have dealt with Women Peace and Security comprehensively. Particular aspects of the agenda, namely Participation, Peace Processes, and Conflict Prevention overwhelmingly neglected. The NGO Working Group Report, has also demonstrated a similar lack of a systematic and comprehensive approach in Security Council reports, missions, briefings, and presidential statements.

We can see this lack of leadership and comprehensive implementation within the Security Council has direct impact on the ground. For instance, we know that from recent data women are still consistently excluded from peace negotiations, and there has been little change since the Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. UNWomen reports that, in of 31

major peace processes undertaken between 1992 and 2011, only 9% of negotiators 4% of signatories and 2.4% of chief mediators were women. We also know that approximately half of all peace agreements fail within five years of signing, and that failure to utilise the expertise or consider the differential needs of the female population are contributing factors to such failure.

We also know that in political transitions, including those of the Arab Spring, women are being marginalized from the transitional processes, despite being integrally involved in the revolutions and deeply invested in the social and political future of their nations. It is with regret we note that there has been insufficient high-level leadership on this issue, and the international mechanisms and instruments that would ensure women's full participation are resolutely ignored. The full and effective participation of women in crisis management and post-conflict planning in contexts such as Eastern DRC, Haiti, and the escalating crisis in Syria must also be prioritized in the Security Council's work.

The recent adoption of the first Arms Trade Treaty is a significant achievement, one which the Australian government has demonstrated strong leadership. The ATT is the first treaty to recognize the links between the international arms trade and gender-based violence, and we strongly urge the Australian government to make these linkages with Women Peace and Security agenda, namely women's leadership and full participation in disarmament, as well as demobilization and reintegration processes.

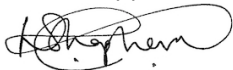
Taking a lead on enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding is consistent with the 2010 Secretary-General's Report which lays out a 7 point plan to address some of these shortfalls, including engaging women in substantive roles in peace talks, and post-conflict planning processes, and the promotion of women's political participation and leadership (including through temporary special measures). Enhancing women's meaningful participation and peacebuilding is fundamental to the objectives of the Women Peace and Security Agenda, and to the attainment of sustainable peace.

We believe that Australia's decision to take leadership on this issue during the September presidency of the Council is an important opportunity to highlight this, and to move forward with holistic intention. We wish to formally convey our full support for the thematic focus, and to encourage the Australian government to also use this important opportunity to take a strong lead, raise awareness of, and advocate for the effective implementation of Women Peace and Security Agenda here in Australia.

With Warm Regards,

Barbara O'Dwyer, Coordinator WILPF Australia

Laura Sheppard, Women Peace and Security Academic Collective, A/Professor UNSW



Sharna de Lacy, Young WILPF Australia

