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Preliminary Analysis: NZ National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

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This update provides a brief preliminary analysis of the New Zealand National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including 1325, on Women, Peace & Security, 2015 to 2019 (NAP), which was released last week at the time of the UN Security Council's High Level Review of 15 years of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Links to the NAP and related resources are included below.

Although the NAP has some improvements when compared with the draft version - it does now include a reference to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations (CEDAW/C/GC/30), although it does not say anything about assessing the NAP in conjunction with CEDAW/C/GC/30 and New Zealand's other human rights obligations as suggested by Peace Movement Aotearoa and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Aotearoa section, for example - it still has too much emphasis on women in the armed forces and overseas deployments, and the distinction between UN peacekeeping operations and combat deployments is blurred.

Both New Zealand's statement at the UN Security Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, and the MFAT NAP web page, refer to women and the armed forces before referring to the other aspects of the NAP - *"We have had women in front line peacekeeping roles since 2000. We are also working to ensure that women are included at more senior levels in future peacekeeping operations. New Zealand's National Action Plan focuses on improving international deployment rates of senior staff within the New Zealand Defence Force and New Zealand Police to increase the numbers of women at decision making levels in peacekeeping and assistance missions"*, and *"New Zealand's National Action Plan focuses on the participation and leadership of women, including improving international deployment rates of senior staff within the New Zealand Defence Force and New Zealand Police to increase the numbers of women at decision making levels in peacekeeping and assistance missions overseas"*, respectively.

In the NAP, the description of the UN identified *"four complementary and overlapping thematic areas for conceptualising actions and measuring progress in the women, peace and security agenda"* (pp 8 and 9) has, under the heading 'protection': *"Strengthening and amplifying efforts to protect the human rights of women and girls, and ensure their physical and economic wellbeing, with particular regard to sexual and gender-based violence. In the context of the Pacific, this includes institutional strengthening of local police and judiciary in order to protect the rights of victims and reducing sexual and gender-based violence."*

Yet the opening (and half of) the 'protection' section of New Zealand's policy framework for implementing the UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security is: *"Increasing the number*

of New Zealand women deployed in police and military roles in UNSC mandated peacekeeping missions, international assistance missions and other peace keeping operations; improving the capability of peacekeeping and international assistance missions to respond to women's needs". (p 11)

While the NAP has photos of women in the New Zealand armed forces (an example can be seen on the Facebook post), there are no photos of New Zealand women involved in civilian peace building or humanitarian assistance.

The militarised aspects of the NAP, together with the lack of analysis of the impacts of militarism and militarisation here and overseas, are a contrast to the focus of the comprehensive 418 page report 'Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325', also released last week. The Global Study emphasises that prevention of conflict must be the priority, not the use of force, and includes the reminder that Resolution 1325 is a human rights mandate: *"It must not be forgotten that resolution 1325 was conceived of and lobbied for as a human rights resolution that would promote the rights of women in conflict situations. Any policy or programme on women, peace and security must be conducted with this in mind. Attempts to 'securitize' issues and to use women as instruments in military strategy must be consistently discouraged."* (p 15)

While the Global Study does include comment and recommendations on women in armed forces and peacekeeping operations, it proposes a much wider, transformational and positive approach to women, peace and security, as the following quotes illustrate.

"Reliance on the use of force as the sole means of conflict resolution may, itself, actually create and perpetuate a cycle of violence. This is why women all over the world reiterated to us that military responses should be used sparingly. As was stated earlier, they argued that prevention and protection through nonviolent means should be emphasized more by the international system, and more resources should be dedicated to this endeavor." (p 25)

"Ultimately, for advocates of sustainable peace and security interlinked with development and human rights, the value of the women, peace and security agenda is its potential for transformation, rather than greater representation of women in existing paradigms of militarized response." (p 135)

"A militarized view of conflict prevention sells Resolution 1325 short of its transformative vision for a more equal, just and peaceful world, and neglects a proven tool available to achieve this" (p 194); and "This Study is not suggesting that military responses do not have their place in the global lexicon of protection. However, it cannot be denied that the international community has been too slow to put in place effective early warning and prevention measures or address root causes even where they are apparent, and too quick to react to crises with an armed response. An attitudinal shift is needed away from a primary focus on military responses, towards investment in peaceful conflict prevention strategies." (p 195)

"Critically, militarism serves to uphold and perpetuate structural inequalities that in turn operate to disenfranchise women and girls from public goods, entrench exclusion and marginalization, and create the ingredients for a platform of broader inequalities that increase the potential for violent conflict to occur." (p 207)

Furthermore: *"The Global Study concludes, not with a recommendation, but with a call to action. The great changes we are undergoing must primarily be understood in the context of the*

needs and concerns of women in specific situations of conflict. The 'local' must clearly be the most important factor in our analysis. Nevertheless, women spoke with one voice from every continent to convey a key message to the Security Council: the United Nations must take the lead in stopping the process of militarization and militarism that began in 2001 in an ever-increasing cycle of conflict. The normalization of violence at the local, national and international levels must cease. Networks of women peacebuilders and peacemakers must be expanded and supported to come to the fore. Their solidarity is essential if we are to move the world toward the original vision of the United Nations, where nations turn their 'swords into plowshares' and act with conviction to prevent wars through dialogue and discussion." (p 17)

Ultimately, what is missing from the NAP is what the Global Study refers to as: "*Structural or longer-term approaches to preventing armed conflict [that] address the underlying causes of war and violence.*" This approach aims "*to bring about a reduction in the potential for armed or political violence over time and promote non-violent means to address acute need and rights entitlements. They include efforts to address structural inequality and violence, promote human rights and human security, and engage in demilitarization, disarmament and reduction in spending on armaments. Global military spending in 2014 (USD 1.7 trillion) is almost thirteen times higher than development aid allocations from OECD-DAC member countries (approximately USD 135 billion).*" (p 204)

It should be noted in this regard that New Zealand's total budget for overseas development assistance (ODA) this year is only 15.9% of the more than \$3.45 billion allocated for military spending - it is unclear what proportion of the ODA budget is directed specifically to women and girls, but it is clearly substantially less than the amount directed to the armed forces.

Links:

- 'New Zealand National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including 1325, on Women, Peace & Security, 2015 - 2019', New Zealand government, October 2015, <http://mfat.govt.nz/downloads/media-and-publications/Features/NZ%20National%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Women%20Peace%20and%20Security.pdf>
- Open Debate: Women, Peace and Security - Statement delivered by Gerard van Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations, 13 October 2015, <http://www.nzembassy.com/united-nations/new-zealands-un-statements/security-council/women-peace-and-security>
- New Zealand's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, MFAT, 14 October 2015, <http://mfat.govt.nz/Media-and-publications/Features/994-NZ-National-Action-Plan-Women-Peace-Security.php>
- 'Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325', UN Women, October 2015, <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf> Global Study site, <http://wps.unwomen.org/en>
- 'Women, weapons, and war: A gendered critique of multilateral instruments', Reaching Critical Will (WILPF), October 2015, <http://reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/10464-new-publication-on-women-weapons-and-war>
- 'An innovative women, peace and security agenda', PeaceWomen (WILPF), ongoing, <http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions>