

The Hon Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare; Minister for the Status of Women
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

18 October 2011

Dear Minister Ellis,

Response to the Consultation Draft on Women, Peace and Security

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Consultation Draft of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. As you know, many women's NGOs have been very active in advocating for the development of a National Action Plan and as such, we have jointly drafted a response representing the views of the organisations that are signatories.

We welcome the release of the NAP Consultation Draft. We would like to express our concern about its overall lack of clarity, coherence and cogency. . While we commend the strong focus on violence against women in conflict situations there is less attention given to women's participation in prevention, peace-building and leadership roles. Both are important.

The importance of the full involvement of women in peace-building strategies is twofold. Firstly, if women are not present in ceasefire negotiations, peace talks and peace agreements, it is near-impossible to increase women's status and visibility in peace processes. Their involvement in implementing peace processes is made more difficult and the chances of sustainable peace are reduced. Secondly, given that donor funding tends to flow from peace agreement priorities, if women are not included in these processes (and therefore gender equality is not mentioned), it is unlikely that gender equality measures will be given the funding they require as part of building sustained peace.

In terms of generating change, the Draft currently lacks clear targets, timeframes, indicators, precise language and baseline data, all of which are crucial to ensuring that the NAP would be effectively implemented and measured. We understand from the Office for Women that there is a separate project being undertaken to develop indicators for the National Action Plan, so we have included some recommendations about possible measurements which could be used.

As you have acknowledged, the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Federal Police and AusAID play an important role in building the capacity of women's organisations in the countries where they operate. These bodies have a unique opportunity to empower women and promote gender equality. To do this, they must not only incorporate gender frameworks into their operations, they must also reflect the principles of gender equality in their own structures, processes and composition. It is

therefore essential that the NAP delivers a comprehensive set of guidelines and processes that will ensure that the ADF, AFP and AusAID will represent the change we all wish to see in fragile, conflict and post-conflict states. For it is only when true and lasting gender equality is achieved that true and lasting peace can prevail. Attention also should be given to building capacity in peace and security matters at a national level, including involving indigenous Australians where possible.

In this submission you will find our general recommendations, followed by the attached document with specific recommendations against each of the four priority area outcomes.

General recommendations:

1. The overall clarity and ultimate effectiveness of the NAP would be greatly enhanced by using the structure and language of the Report of the Secretary-General 'Women and peace and security' S/2010/173 on the development of indicators for monitoring implementation of SCR 1325. One successful example of where this language has been incorporated is the Canadian NAP. The Swedish and Danish NAPs are also useful examples to work from. Indicators require strategies, indicators of measurement and evaluation as well as designated responsibilities.
2. It is imperative that the link between protecting women in violent conflict and enhancing their participation and leadership in conflict prevention and peace-building processes is front-and-centre when formulating objectives, implementation and monitoring methods. Distinctions should be made between plans to implement an increased representation of women in peace and security matters in national, regional and international institutions.
3. The 1325 NAP must connect to and reference Australia's existing commitments, particularly CEDAW and the additional UNSC Resolutions on women, peace and security, UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960, in order to align the outcomes of the NAP with our pre-existing obligations.
4. The language used in the Draft lacks clarity, and would benefit from more precise terms and definitions. Key phrases such as 'a gender perspective' and 'a gender-sensitive approach' need to be more sharply defined in context in order to develop clear objectives for the NAP. Alternatively, stronger terms such as 'gender equality' or clear explanations such as 'developing approaches that take into account the differential experiences of women and men, girls and boys', should be used instead. Instead of 'will respond to', use active words such as 'responds'. Instead of vague 'may include', use 'includes'. There is benefit also in drawing more on Australian research for relevant quotations in the preamble.
5. Furthermore, there is a lack of opportunities for civil society engagement in the current Draft. The role of civil society is pivotal to the success of the NAP, as they provide important contacts, support bases and local expertise that will ensure that the NAP remains relevant to those it is trying to protect and support. We therefore recommend that an NGO Advisory Group be established and engaged to work with the Government's interdepartmental working group in the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan's implementation.
6. Progress on NAP should be reported every two years with an extensive review conducted every 3 years. The process for review should be modelled on CEDAW Shadow Report process and include evidence of monitoring and evaluation frameworks that use quantitative and qualitative (participatory) data collection methodologies. In this way, the Plan will be able to map its actions against stakeholders' responsibilities. In order for the Plan to be effective, it is imperative that it receive sufficient funding across all aspects of consultation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Given the short timeframe for feedback to be provided, our recommendations are somewhat limited; however, we would welcome the opportunity for a representative to speak with you on the issue at your earliest convenience.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important document. We sincerely hope that this is the first step towards a comprehensive and impactful National Action Plan that will change the lives of women, girls and their communities for the better.

In the spirit of working together on this important issue, we look forward to hearing from you.

This report has been co-authored and endorsed by:

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