

**SENATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE:
UNSCR 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

March 24, 2014

Madame Chair, Honourable Senators and civil society colleagues here and – if I may - hello to students in my human rights class who are watching the live stream of this hearing from the University of Winnipeg, instead of hearing me lecture in person in class today:

Thank you for this opportunity to bring brief remarks on behalf of Canadian Voice of Women for Peace to express concerns and suggestions regarding Canada's National Action Plan (2010) and the two annual progress reports on its implementation released recently by the Government of Canada.

Since its founding in 1960, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace members have advocated domestically and internationally for the abolition of war, demilitarization and the inclusion of women in decision-making - at all levels, related to peace and security. My remarks today fix on the nexus of women's human rights and human security as essential to law, policy and actions in our constitutional democracy in a global context.

The adoption of SCR 1325 in 2000 confirmed further the decades-long vow rationale for women's inclusion – for the *prevention* of violent conflict, *protection* from its harms, and *participation* in the machinery of decision-making. VOW members are pleased that VOW is a founding member organization of the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada, as well as active in many other peace-linked affiliations, including accreditation by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Last week I returned from the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women where VOW, for the 24th time, participated. This year we hosted a packed “intergenerational international dialogue on peace education”, featuring young Canadian women leaders from NL, ON, MB and BC outlining peace camps that they are building for girls, with VOW support, which generated strong international interest in adaptation of this model. When I presented to this Senate Committee last May, I shared with you one of these peace education projects - resulting in a new ‘women peace and security’ badge being developed with Girl Guides in MB.

In my closing remarks I will make four recommendations on behalf of VOW, but let me highlight now our deep conviction that military training and practice in non-violent responses to conflict need to be essential and immediate priorities - utilising women's leadership at every level.

Let me put my remarks in the context of the agreed conclusions reached just a few days ago at the 58th session of the UN CSW: "the Commission noted the universal context of gender

equality and recognizes that almost fifteen years after the MDGs were launched, no country has achieved equality for women and girls, and significant levels of inequality between women and men persist, although the MDGs are important in efforts to eradicate poverty and of key importance to the international community. The Commission reaffirms the vital role of women as agents of development, and recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women must be achieved to realize the unfinished business of the MDGs and accelerate sustainable development beyond 2015”

... and lest anyone listening make the mistake of isolating WPS in a silo separate from women’s human rights - including the right to development - let me assure you that women the world over thrive at the nexus of human rights and human security – supported by the normative framework constructed of CEDAW, the suite of WPS SCRs and other rights defined by international law.

To illustrate the alignment of this most recent consensus statement from the UN on women’s rights, I’ll now quickly review key commitments made by the harper government in the 2010 C-NAP, including:

- Increasing the active and meaningful participation of women, including indigenous and local women, in peace operations and peace processes...
- Increasing the effectiveness of peace operations, including the protection and promotion of the rights and safety of women and girls
- Improving the capacity of Canadian personnel to help prevent violence and to contribute to protecting the human rights of women and girls in the context of peace operations, fragile states, conflict-affected situations and in humanitarian crises or relief and recovery operations.
- Promoting and supporting relief and recovery efforts in fragile states and conflict-affected countries in a manner which takes into account the differential experiences of women and men, boys and girls.
- Making the leadership of peace operations more accountable for carrying out their mandated responsibilities by realizing, to the maximum extent practicable, the intent of the suite of SCRs on women, peace and security - which VOW submits must be read as progressive and inclusive – through to the significant shift called for in the most recent SCRs 2106 and 2122 adopted unanimously in 2013.

As civil society leaders have brought to this Committee’s attention previously: the C-NAP itself was disappointing and weak, given the absence of any specific commitments on investments or resources to implement the aspirations. We appreciate the release of the long-awaited annual progress reports this year, but we ask for more sharing of information in a timely and open manner by DFATD, Dept of Defence, the RCMP and other government departments working in this area.

Canadian officials have been consistently hospitable, open and generous to students that I bring to Ottawa and to the UN in NY - for which we are sincerely appreciative. However, as the coordinating author of the Canada chapter in the recently released 2013 'Civil Society Monitoring Report on SCR 1325' by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, it was a tough day to be with my students at the launch of the report - hosted by the Canadian mission to the UN in NY - and to see that Canada's rating on the international scorecard could have been so much better if only information had been shared by government departments when it was requested for the Canada chapter, because the websites are so out of date.

Nobody benefits when Canada appears to be under-performing on international indicators on women peace and security.

Let me end with four recommendations for specific actions to augment effective implementation of the lofty words in the 2010 C-NAP:

1. That the recently merged and renamed Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade adopt a new clear and strong gender equality policy with an entrenched adequately resourced mechanism for reporting and measuring intra-departmental progress toward implementation targets across all areas of the department's work, within the normative framework consistent with Canada's human rights and human security obligations under the CEDAW, its recent GR30 on women in conflict and post-conflict situations, and the full suite of WPS SCRs including SCR 2122 - a strong complement to CEDAW that clearly acknowledges women as leaders and peacemakers as well as the harsh truth that women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of sexualized gender -based violence.
2. That the Harper Government appoint a high-level champion on WPSN issues (VOW agrees with this WPSN-C recommendation) with a dedicated budget for liaison and inclusion of women's civil society organizations that have demonstrated expertise in this field.
3. We urge this Committee to examine the unjust impact of Canada restricting funding for women's access to the full range of reproductive health services in humanitarian crises and conflict situations. This restriction is contrary to the spirit of the most recent SCR 2122 which specifically states: "recognizing the importance of member states and United Nations entities seeking to ensure humanitarian aid and funding includes provision for the full range of medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services to women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and noting the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without

discrimination...”

4. VOW uses 'evidence-based advocacy' - but solid up-to-date evidence from our government needs to be more openly shared - in Canada and in countries where Canada is helping to support peacebuilding; we recommend that Canada collect regularly and disseminate statistics on the minimum set of 'gender' indicators and the core set of 'violence against women' indicators adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2013.

Thank you for this opportunity to bring some feasible recommendations for immediate steps to implement the Canadian NAP on WPS, on behalf of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

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For: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace