



## Standing Senate Human Rights Committee Presentation

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good morning to all. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear today. I'm Beth Woroniuk and I am a member of the steering committee of the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada.

As you may be aware, our Network is made up of over 60 Canadian organizations and individuals - including The Match International Women's Fund. We have 2 objectives:

One is to promote and monitor the efforts of the Government of Canada to implement and support the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security; and

The second is to provide a forum for exchange and action amongst Canadian civil society on this same theme.

We operate as volunteers with no office or budget.

In my comments today, I will cover three broad areas: 1) positive developments, 2) ongoing concerns and 3) priorities for action.

We are pleased to report that there have been some positive developments, since we appeared before you last year.

The Network is now holding bi-annual meetings with the inter-departmental working group on women, peace and security chaired by the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force or START in DFATD.

**As a second development**, we are pleased to note that the RCMP has extended an invitation to our Network to observe parts of their pre-deployment training and advise on improvements. We have had several informative meetings with the RCMP and look forward to working with them on this important issue.

**And as a third positive development**, we commend the government for its recent [statement](#) on the United Nation's response to sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, both military and civilian. Civil society will be monitoring the mandate and composition of the External Independent Review, recently announced by the UN Secretary-General, to ensure that it is truly the impartial, independent and broad review of the UN's system-wide handling of sexual exploitation and abuse that is so urgently needed.

Despite these advances, we continue to have major and ongoing concerns regarding gaps in Canada's positions and actions on the women, peace and security agenda.

**First**, we continue to be frustrated by the lack of regular and timely reporting on Canada's National Action Plan. As you are aware, the report for the period April 2013-March 2014 has yet to be released. Even if this report were to be released tomorrow, the information in it would be significantly out of date. Nor have we seen the mid-term review conducted last year. With these delays in reporting, we do not know what progress, if any, has been made.

**A second concern is that** we are disappointed by the lack of Canadian action on 2 major issues – the failure to fund the full range of sexual and reproductive health services including those related to pregnancy resulting from rape (as recognized in UN Security Council Resolution 2122) and Canada's failure to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. Inaction on these issues undermines efforts to address and respond to the full range of women, peace and security issues.

**Our third concerns**, is that we are also disappointed by the slow response of the government and the Department of National Defense to the recommendations of the recent inquiry chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps on sexual abuse in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the following priorities:

**First**, Canadian engagement in conflict **prevention** and supporting women's involvement in conflict resolution should be given a higher priority. The goal is not to make war safe for women, but rather contribute to the peaceful resolution of armed conflict. We urge the government to provide strong and consistent support for involving women in negotiations and efforts to resolve the numerous armed conflicts the world is currently facing.

**A second priority is that** Canada should make significant financial commitments to local, grassroots women's organizations to build their leadership and support their participation in all aspects of peace building, conflict prevention, peace negotiations and economic recovery. This includes providing support to the soon to be launched **Global Acceleration Instrument**. My colleague Ms Tomlin will address this in more detail.

**As a final priority**, we would like to highlight an emerging but little discussed problem namely sexual violence against those working for humanitarian organizations. Investigations conducted by one member of our Network has found little research to date or statistics on this issue despite widespread, on-the-ground knowledge of the crime occurring. Canada should demand zero tolerance policies for all organizations receiving humanitarian assistance and work to ensure stronger international sexual abuse and exploitation prevention and accountability systems.

We would like to thank the Senators for the invitation to appear before the Committee today and welcome the opportunity to engage with you in the future. With the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 being marked this fall, 2015 is an important year. We hope that it will be a year that will mark a new chapter with concrete progress and actual implementation of the goals behind the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Thank you.