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The Honourable Robert Nault, P.C., M.P.
Chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs
and International Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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April 22, 2016

Dear Mr. Nault:

CARE Canada was deeply honoured to have been invited to testify before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on March 10, 2016, in the context of its study on Women, Peace and Security.

As noted during that testimony, we believe that Canada has an opportunity to build on its past leadership in this area by appointing a high-level authority on gender-responsive foreign policy, launching a cutting-edge, Second Generation National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and championing efforts at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit to integrate local women's groups more meaningfully in a reformed global humanitarian architecture.

CARE Canada is honoured to include with this correspondence a written response to your question about the means by which Canada can promote women's involvement in peace processes.

We are also pleased to submit a new CARE research study, [*Women, Work and War*](#), which was released at the UN Commission on the Status of Women last month in New York. The study contains valuable insight into the situation of Syrian women as the conflict in that country enters its sixth year. We hope you the Committee will find this information of value in its ongoing study of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Barth
President and CEO
CARE Canada

How can Canada help encourage women's participation in peace processes?

Pursuant to a request by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development during its meeting on March 10, 2016, CARE Canada is pleased to share the following suggestions as to how Canada can help encourage women's participation in peace processes.

// Context

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for increased women's participation in decision making on peace and security. A recent survey of 40 peace processes shows that women's ability to influence negotiations increased the chances of agreements being reached, was positively correlated with greater implementation, and impacted positively on peace being sustained.

Besides participation, however, UNSCR 1325 also recognizes the need to promote the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence, the role of women and girls in preventing conflict and reducing violence, and in supporting the relief and recovery of conflict-affected communities. Together, participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery constitute the four 'pillars' upholding the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Involving women in peace negotiations, in and of itself, is not enough – it must be part of a comprehensive approach that addresses all four pillars in an integrated way. As a dual-mandate, humanitarian relief and international development organization, CARE Canada views women's empowerment and peacebuilding as transformational processes that need to take place simultaneously at different levels. Towards this end, we propose the following five recommendations.

// Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen NAP localization processes_** In order to regain the transformative intent behind the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the international community needs to step up efforts at all levels to enable meaningful participation by women and girls from the grassroots – including those worst affected by conflict – in decision-making processes. Participation in decision-making at the time of relief, recovery and peacebuilding often later translates into women's participation in the shaping of the economic, social, and political life of their communities and countries. Donors, regional bodies and multilateral institutions should support conflict-affected states and civil society to implement participatory approaches to developing and monitoring policies, strategies and programmes on peace and security. Leading examples include embedding "localisation" strategies into technical assistance and funding to National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, promoting gender-responsive budgeting and participatory monitoring in peace, security, governance and development strategies, and use of social accountability tools, such as "[Community Score Cards](#)", to empower women to participate in defining priorities and monitoring and accountability efforts regarding service delivery and governance at the local level.

- 2. Enhance participation by grassroots women in UN Security Council (SC) decision-making on peace and security_** This can be accomplished by:
- a. Establishing new annual Open Briefing Sessions on UNSCR 1325 participation efforts relating to countries on the Security Council agenda;
 - b. Bringing grassroots women to New York to contribute to SC deliberations for each political or military mission mandate renewal and/or emergency SC meetings on country-specific mandates;
 - c. Authorizing groups of SC experts to visit selected countries under SC mandate to assess progress on participation; and
 - d. Establishing a senior official position at the level of Assistant Under-Secretary General based at UN Women, whose portfolio would prominently feature fast-tracking women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts.

This recommendation is reflected in the [Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325](#).

- 3. Establish high-level champions_** In his September 2015 [report on Women, Peace and Security](#), United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon underscored that National Action Plans' effectiveness depends on strong leadership and effective coordination. The 2013-2014 Progress Report on Canada's National Action Plan reached similar conclusions. Other countries, such as Australia and Sweden, have created Ambassadorial positions on global gender equality and rights. A respected and visible Canadian authority on gender-responsive foreign policy could be mandated to:

- a. Coordinate and monitor the implementation of Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security across key departments;
- b. Ensure gender is central to Canadian diplomatic, peacebuilding and development efforts;
- c. Manage linkages with key processes, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- d. Advocate for women's and girls' human rights.

The Government of Canada's commitment to gender-responsive policy could be further strengthened by the establishment of senior positions dedicated to promoting gender perspectives in policies in all departments.

- 4. Adopt a cutting-edge, Second Generation National Action Plan_** Canada can lead efforts to renew the Women, Peace and Security agenda by adopting a new, cutting-edge Second Generation National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The Plan should have the status of a policy directive and be:

- a. Underpinned by dedicated and flexible funding,
- b. Driven by results-oriented indicators, concrete targets and timelines, and
- c. Backed by robust monitoring and evaluation.

Reports on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda have repeatedly called for these elements to be included in National Action Plans. Adequate funding for women's civil society organizations is critical for building local capacities to engage in decision-making, and to respond in emergency situations. The Secretary General, for example, has committed the United Nations system to allocate at least 15 percent of funding for conflict affected areas for initiatives whose principle objective is gender equality and women's empowerment. The collection of gender, age and diversity disaggregated data remains critical for quality program design, as well as for fostering accountability for investments, results and impacts.

5. Encourage other countries to adopt Nation Action Plans_ While National Action Plans (NAPs) on women, peace and security are not a 'silver bullet', they can provide a useful entry point for dialogue between governments and women's organisations. For example, with the exception of Iraq, states affected by the Syrian conflict are yet to adopt National Action Plans (NAPs) on women, peace and security. As governments neighbouring Syria talk to the UN and donors about the kinds of funding and technical support they need to host refugees and cope with the conflict's impacts, integrating women, peace and security indicators into those efforts would help. NAPs could facilitate this. Other countries affected by or recovering from conflict that currently lack NAPs include: Myanmar, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Yemen, and Sudan. Canada should exercise available diplomatic channels and resources to encourage such countries to adopt and implement NAPs meeting the criteria set out above.

// Conclusion

In its Agreed Conclusions released on March 24, 2016, entitled [Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development](#), the Commission on the Status of Women underscored the need to "ensure the participation of women and girls at all levels of decision-making in emergency, recovery, reconstruction, conflict resolution and peace-building processes; provide education for all, especially girls, to contribute to a smooth transition from relief to development and address sexual and gender-based violence as an integral and prioritized part of every humanitarian response; and in this respect, [to encourage] the World Humanitarian Summit to give due consideration to integrating a gender perspective into its deliberations."

CARE Canada welcomes this latest high-level affirmation of the validity of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and shares the view that the [upcoming World Humanitarian Summit](#) provides a key opportunity to continue momentum towards the fulfilment of that agenda. Canada can and must support efforts to operationalize the Women, Peace and Security agenda within a reformed global humanitarian architecture. We encourage the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and all Parliamentarians to inform and guide those efforts, including through their consideration of the recommendations above.

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