



10th anniversary of Resolution 1325

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In an ideal world, all those involved in the fight for gender equality, in the fight for peace and in the fight for a safe world would have perfect knowledge of the Security Council's Resolution 1325. But, in an ideal world, such a resolution would make no sense, it would have no relevance and no use, since gender equality, the respect for fundamental rights and peace and security would be commonplace.

I will not insult your intelligence by telling you that our world is far from ideal and that currently, the commitments one is asked to adhere to by virtue of resolution 1325 are highly relevant. This is partly because it pertains to tragedies that affect whole sections of mankind. It is also because, today still, many of the commitments included in the resolution are largely unknown to most.

On the 31st of October, 2000, the day resolution 1325 was adopted, it was hailed as an innovation; indeed, it placed gender and recognition of gender at the forefront of actions undertaken to prevent conflict, to re-establish peace and to repair the damages caused by war. It was probably not all that innovating but still, after so many years, these considerations were at last included in a resolution by the Security Council.

Adopting this resolution was a victory, but we still had a long way to go in terms of its implementation.

In our efforts to meet the commitments made by virtue of the resolution, we still face many pitfalls and challenges, and we should take the time to review some of them:

1) The first consists in a better definition of peace. What is peace? In this country at least, peace is a recurrent theme, debated at length by those involved. Consensus over the meaning of this world is easily achievable, even more so since the term has neither applicable, nor precise meaning. Some are content with defining it as the absence of war, instead of defining it as the presence of numerous elements, such as the fundamental right of human beings and communities. What about war? On the 11th of September, 2001, thousands of Americans

were killed in a terrorist attack. Within a matter of hours, gruesome images were being broadcast throughout the world. We were told that “This is War!”

On that very day, according to the FAO, over 35 000 children worldwide died of starvation, as every other day of every other year. Nothing was said of that.

And it wasn't only "9/11". There are numerous wars that are not recognised as such, but continue to cause hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Peace is not the absence of war. It's an ideal situation where all the fundamental human rights, as stated in texts relating to Humanitarian International Law and Human Rights, are respected and implemented. It is only by coming to terms with this fact, that we will give the word “peace” a real meaning. It will be more than the mere antonym of war. We will have created a real project to implement resolution 1325.

2) Resolution 1325 states: “that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.” How could one disagree with such a statement? How can one not be in favour of calls to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels, in peace processes, as special representatives, or in peace-keeping operations? All these demands are legitimate and must be met. Although we need an increased participation of women in peace efforts, in conflict settlement, and in post-war reparation, these efforts must be made in a broad manner, with the idea of strengthening our efficiency in every aspect of daily life. Their rights must be improved and guaranteed in every aspect of life. This goal can only be achieved if it is also accepted by men. Committed women will achieve better results only if men understand and agree with the importance of such a process.

The idea is clearly not to implement this resolution against men, but with their help. Women do not want to compete with men; they simply want to bring another perspective that has grown from different experiences, to implement another approach comprising elements that are necessary to a stable and sustainable peace, such as education, health, etc. We are not better or worse than one another, just complementary and necessary parts of the solution.

3) Every care must be taken to avoid seeing in this Resolution an underlying pattern, an age-old illusion, entertained more by men than feminists, that women are in some way naturally better than men, and that they are therefore destined to be forever the victims, and nothing more, of the violence committed by men and the gruesome wars that they wage against each other.

Women are undeniably the victims of conflicts, but this does in no way mean that they don't participate in these conflicts. Women are not only the victims of violence; they can also be the instigators and deciders of wars. This is precisely the reason why they can be - and must be - to the same extent as men, instigators and deciders of peace. Resolution 1325 reaffirms “the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building” and stresses “the importance of their equal participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.” Including women in peace and security efforts is crucial, not only because they are the victims and the “angelic half of heaven”, but also because there are also sometimes part of the hell, because they sometimes participate in wars, violence and insecurity.

Resolution 1325 should therefore not be read as an argument for the superiority of women over men, but as a statement of their presence and of the need to recognise them as stakeholders of peace as of war.

4) Preventing war and building peace are tasks for humanity as a whole. It is a duty bestowed on all men, on all women, and not on one more than the other. It is however true that because women are subject to a specific kind of violence and that they are victims of this violence because they are women, there are fundamental rights associated with women. These rights are violated because of their very nature, and that is why the contribution of women in the prevention of this violence and in the promotion of these rights is essential. However it would be a mistake to restrict the work of women to the promotion of women's rights. It would weaken the collective efforts of humanity towards peace and the respect of human rights. It would be a bad thing. Women must strive to achieve justice for all, women and men. This notion was clearly understood during the World March of Women. It provided the stage for the promotion of political rights and social rights, peace building, equal rights and a fair sharing of duties between men and women. Not only do we want to see an increased presence of women in bodies and organisations dedicated to peace-building, but we also want their presence to be for the good of all humanity. And we expect the same from men; we want their struggle to be towards the promotion of the rights of both men and women. The absence of men is apparent in movements such as the Movement of the Women in Black in Bosnia or the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Four challenges therefore remain: defining peace as more than the absence of war, implementing Resolution 1325 with men and not against them, taking into account the status of women as participants, and not only as victims, and committing women to the promotion of rights for all, and not only of rights for women. These four challenges must be kept in mind by the architects and defenders of the Resolution 1325. They must take every measure to address them.

A decade has gone by since the adoption of the Resolution 1325. What can we expect for the next ten years, and from the work that is still to be done not only in terms of implementing specific recommendations of the resolution, but also in promoting its underlying concept, the belatedly recognised idea that the building, maintaining and consolidating of peace is a task for all mankind, women and men? It is the very legitimacy of the presence of women that is at stake, because we cannot exclude half of humanity from a fight for all humanity.

At this point of my speech and in addition to the challenges I have listed, please allow me to share with you the experience I have acquired with the organisation I run, Geneva Call. My organisation is specifically tasked with negotiating with armed non-State actors and bringing them to respect humanitarian norms. Geneva Call has established contacts with over 60 armed groups worldwide. And, in many of these movements, women are well represented.

From having listened to these women, from having learned from their experience, I am now able to put forth some new elements that we feel are lacking in the discussions surrounding Resolution 1325.

First of all, as already stated, women are not only the victims of violence and wars, they can also be participants. But we haven't given enough thought to the reason why women decide to take up arms. Understanding is the only way we will answer this question. In a majority of cases, the political involvement of women was not sufficient to justify their participation in armed conflict. In a majority of cases, the ultimate decision to take up arms was made following a rape or sexual abuse perpetrated by an agent of the State (soldier, police officer, civil servant). Preventing sexual violence is therefore not only a major concern during

conflicts or peace-keeping missions, it is also an important upstream peace factor. It's a global and constant priority. The State must be able to ensure protection against this kind of aggression, and the immunity of perpetrators must be banished. This is a key element; impunity increases the desire for vengeance and willingness to resort to violence.

So, more than merely making noble statements, a first step towards an improved implementation of Resolution 1325 is achieving a better understanding of the underlying factors.

2) the Resolution also states that women must be involved in the negotiation process. Peace must be discussed among all the participants in the conflict. Today, an increasing number of conflicts are internal, pitting one or several armed groups against the State. It follows that when the time for negotiations comes, they will involve representatives of the State and representatives of the armed group or groups. The Resolution calls for "more women", but again, little thought is given to the way this may be achieved. The women we meet through our work all say the same thing: "as long as we fight by the men, they let us in, we feel like freedom fighters. But as soon as the negotiations begin, we are excluded from the talks."

What is the international community doing about this? Based on the noble intentions behind Resolution 1325, it demands that women be present. However, in some instances, this presence has only served to ridicule the women who took part. They were unprepared, not trained, and didn't play the part that was expected from them as they were simply unable to play that part. Donator countries that require this kind of presence bear a big part of responsibility. If one is convinced of the essential role that women have to play during negotiations, then it is absolutely crucial that women be prepared for their role **beforehand**. We have met countless woman combatants who asked us: "help us learn how to speak in front of an audience, give us negotiation tools and techniques, teach us the fundamental texts and other conventions". But countries that support Resolution 1325 turn a blind eye on this type of consideration and no assistance is given to meet these demands.

There are however some exceptions, such as Swiss initiatives in Nepal.

The process is the same when the international community involved in rebuilding democratic systems demands that gender quotas be respected. An example of this is when one of Burundi's armed groups finally won the elections and stepped into office. It was decided that the parliament should include a quota of women of at least 25%. It was a noble initiative, promoted by the international community. Soon after, I travelled to Burundi and met two woman ex-combatants whom I was acquainted with when they were still actively fighting, and who had since become members of the Parliament. They told me of their joy of having achieved peace. But they also told me of their anguish of having to vote on the yearly budget of their county, as they had never been trained to do so. Going from guerrilla warfare to parliamentary debates, laying down the sword for the pen signing decrees and laws, is not only possible because the architects of Resolution 1325 deemed it to be a good thing. It's a process in which much effort must be invested, constantly, globally, and again, upstream.

Let me be absolutely clear on this point: I am not saying that all woman combatants are incompetent and illiterate, and that they're in a bigger need of training than men. I am simply saying that most join the armed struggle younger than men do (thus leaving school), or that they come from a society where school ends early for girls, as they are needed for housework and domestic chores, or that the society in which they live does not provide many opportunities for them to play a role and acquire political experience, or that globalisation, which leads to global poverty, and the feminisation of poverty, has a tendency to exclude women from politics.

So, more than merely making noble statements, a second step towards an improved implementation of Resolution 1325 is providing training beforehand.

3) achieving sustainable peace requires that everyone participates, that the rights of all men and women be respected, and that everyone finds a place in society.

Therefore, what happens after the signing of a peace treaty is of fundamental importance. Obviously, this involves various considerations, among which economic recovery and the establishment of functioning transport, health and education systems are at the forefront of our minds.

Our first concern is that processes aimed at demobilizing and reintegrating woman combatants into society is currently not working. This undeniable fact may stem from the definition given to combatant, which is often limited to ownership of a firearm, from the fact that women with children are often excluded from such programs, and that men often return as heroes whereas women return permanently stained and “impure” from fighting.

The second cause for concern is the lack of preparation, of society as a whole, to the return of women from war.

All the old songs written on a backdrop of men going off to war tell the same story: men go off to fight, women stay at home and it's on their shoulders that everything now rests: social cohesion, the production of goods, the survival of the family, the functioning of society, the harvests, the running of factories... And then those who have survived come back and find a world that women have made every effort to keep in a habitable place, in which they have undertaken and assumed a vital role. The return of men means that women can go back to more traditional occupations. If they oppose this process, the resulting tensions will be an important factor of destabilisation. If we want men to return and reinvest their efforts in local peace-building, some form of balance must be found, enabling men to regain their role while allowing women who don't want to return to traditional roles to keep what they have gained. A simple resolution will not suffice in bringing about such a process. What is needed is training and preparation.

So, more than merely making noble statements, a third step towards an improved implementation of Resolution 1325 is preparation and planning.

Swiss national action plan

Before bringing this to an end, I'd like to say a few words about the Swiss national action plan.

First I must congratulate the Swiss Government and the people who have been working on this plan on the quick adoption of the first action plan, which is already being updated and improved, and on the role that Switzerland has played in this project. In addition to this, there are two or three thoughts I would like to share with you.

Switzerland is probably one of the very few countries concerned with the specific role of woman combatants; this point suffers from a lack of attention from the international community. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw this mentioned in the concept note of today's event and I would like to thank the authors.

Unfortunately, such considerations do not appear in the action plan.

Furthermore, in this action plan, the idea is to achieve an optimal implementation of Resolution 1325. Indicators are an important step forward, but considering the weaknesses identified earlier on, I feel that Switzerland should include more research in its action plan, in order to better understand the realities in the field; it could also include more training, in order to make the presence of women more efficient; finally, it should give some thought to preparing local communities to their return to peace, and to ensure the sustainability of such peace. These considerations could be added to the national action plan, and Switzerland has decided to leave the plan open to its own evolution, which is positive.

In conclusion, here are two thoughts about the future that I would like to share with you:

1) Economic theories often state that “what is rare is valuable”. This bodes well for us: indeed, we are still rare enough in this process to benefit from some added value. When the fight for justice is won, then we will have deserved our right to indifference. We are ready to take that risk. But until then, we must fight for our right to be present, not to be ignored. And it seems we still have a long road ahead of us.

2) The last point of Resolution 1325 requires the Security Council to “remain actively seized of the matter” of integrating a gender-equality approach and the full participation of women in all activities relating to peace and security. But as we all know, the Security Council is only “actively seized” of any matter when it is constantly reminded of that matter by social movements and public opinion; indeed, it was only thanks to the latter that Resolution 1325 was adopted. This mobilisation, and the vigilance of national and international stakeholders and of the States involved, in terms of implementing the Resolution, are the only elements that will turn this resolution into something better than a series of politically correct platitudes.

The Security Council is called upon to “remain actively seized of the matter”. Well, so will we!