

# Women for peace

Written by: Ibrahim Gambari, Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Nigeria, and UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Last update: 16 June 2016

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which was adopted in 2000, recognised, for the first time, the vital contribution of women to conflict prevention and resolution. As a symbolic act and practical call to action, the UN resolution acknowledged what we have experienced throughout our careers in diplomacy, business, academia, and development: the involvement of women in peace processes significantly improves the prospects for a more durable peace. Each year since, the role of women in keeping and building peace has figured more prominently in the commemoration of International Women's Day, 8 March. This is rightly so.

**(Left to right) Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani, Founding Chair, Arab International Women's Forum; Ibrahim Gambari, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Nigeria, and UN Under-Secretary- General for Political Affairs**



© Rights reserved

Yet, 16 years on, formidable political, socio-cultural, and economic obstacles remain to the full participation of women in peace efforts, whether as peacemakers or as citizens—something the UN resolution was supposed to help overcome. This is a major conclusion of the Commission on Global Justice, Security & Governance, on which we proudly serve.

In our report, *Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance*, we view gender inequality as a fundamental global governance challenge, especially in conflict-affected environments, where, compared to men, women suffer harm differently and disproportionately. Despite the call in Resolution 1325 for greater female participation in peace processes, they remain acutely under-represented in UN-brokered talks. Research carried out by UNIFEM/UN Women reveals that, in 14 diverse cases since 2000, women's participation in peace negotiation delegations averaged less than 8%, and less than 3% of their signatories were women.

Today, only two of 22 UN under-secretaries-general are women, and in UN missions, women make up less than a third of the international civilian staff, 21% of senior professional levels, and only 18% of national staff. Moreover, the recent Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 found that only 54 countries have formulated National Action Plans for Resolution 1325. Entire regions, notably the Americas and Middle East, are lagging behind.

Meanwhile, the plight of millions of women, men and children in the greater Middle East seeking refuge in nearby Europe and beyond reminds us of the need for urgent action to prevent and end ongoing wars. From sitting at the negotiating table to building the blocks for long-term reconciliation and peaceful co-existence, women are poised to contribute, when given the opportunity, to fair and durable solutions so essential to reduce human suffering.

To ensure that women's voices are heard and decision-makers made more accountable, particularly in fragile states, our commission proposes several innovations to advance a vision of "just security."

**First, strengthen the role of women in peace processes.** Global and regional institutions should appoint women to prominent peace-making roles. International actors that support peace processes should demand women's inclusion in negotiating teams and as signatories to ensure that their experiences and priorities are represented.

**Second, employ National Action Plans for Resolution 1325 as an effective tool of foreign policy.** Incorporating such plans into a country's foreign policy can secure and sustain political will and resources—two critical components for ensuring that a plan's objectives are met and leaders held accountable.

**Third, tackle the socio-economic factors that disadvantage women's status in society.** The commission recognises several such factors, including the lack of access to education, reproductive health services, and decent work opportunities in the formal economy.

**Finally, the commission strongly endorses the UN's goal of empowering women to become national and world leaders in the 21st century.** The Campaign to Elect a Woman UN Secretary General, organised by a group of female

scholars and civil society leaders, is an excellent example towards achieving this goal.



Other international organisations, such as the OECD, are also making headway in bridging the gender gap. As well as one of its four deputy secretary-generals, the OECD's chief of staff, chief economist and chief statistician are women, while the organisation has stepped up its efforts promoting gender inclusiveness, via the online Gender Data Portal, Wikigender, and many reports and studies.

But there is still a long way to go for countries, even among the OECD membership, to implement the changes needed to fight gender discrimination. All too often women, especially in violent conflict and post-conflict settings, struggle to achieve dignified livelihoods and exert decision-making power, lack access to critical services, and suffer serious physical and mental harm—a toxic triple threat that devastates lives and undermines women's ability to contribute to society. The ideas we lay out above should be considered and acted upon with a sense of urgency. We will only begin to meet the most pressing global governance challenges when women, who are disproportionately victims, are part of the solution. This can only happen if all organisations take an active role in fostering gender balance.

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani and Ibrahim Gambari both serve on the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance.

## References

The Hague Institute for Global Justice and the Stimson Center (2015), “Confronting the crisis of global governance”, Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance, June [http://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Commission\\_on\\_Global\\_Security\\_Justice%20Governance\\_0.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Commission_on_Global_Security_Justice%20Governance_0.pdf)

UN Women (2015), Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

UN Women (2010), Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/media/publications/unifem/0302\\_womensparticipationinpeacenegotiations\\_en.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/media/publications/unifem/0302_womensparticipationinpeacenegotiations_en.pdf)

<http://wps.unwomen.org> <http://wps.unwomen.org>

[www.stimson.org/programs/just-security-2020](http://www.stimson.org/programs/just-security-2020) <http://www.stimson.org/programs/just-security-2020>