4. The Gender Dimension in Peacebuilding

- 77 countries suffered serious gender inequalities, 48 of which stood out in particular, mainly concentrated in Africa and Asia. 81% of the armed conflicts for which data was available on gender equality took place in contexts with serious gender inequalities.
- In 2012 the use of sexual violence as a weapon in situations of armed conflict and socio-political crisis was registered in countries including DR Congo, Somalia, Mali, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Colombia or Sri Lanka.
- The UN Secretary-General presented the first report on sexual violence in armed conflicts, which includes a list of the armed, government and opposition actors responsible for crimes of sexual violence.
- Women’s organisations in Mali, Somalia, Colombia, Myanmar and Afghanistan demanded to play a greater role in the peace processes currently under way in these countries.
- Civil society organisations called for the Arms Trade Treaty to take into account the gender dimension and the specific gender impacts of the arms trade.

This chapter provides an analysis of the various initiatives being implemented in peacebuilding processes from a gender perspective by the United Nations and by other local and international organisations and movements. An analysis through this perspective makes it possible to highlight the specific impacts of armed conflict on men and women, as well as the extent to which and the way in which they participate in peacebuilding, in particular the contributions being made by women in this respect. The chapter is structured into three main sections: the first assesses the global gender inequality situation through an analysis of the Gender Inequality Index; the second section analyses the gender dimension in the impact of armed conflicts and socio-political crises; and the final section is devoted to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. A map is included at the start of each chapter that highlights the countries with serious gender inequalities according to the Gender Inequality Index.

4.1. Gender inequalities

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) reflects women’s disadvantage in relation to the situation of men by analysing three dimensions: reproductive health (maternal mortality rate and adolescent fertility rate), empowerment (women and men with at least secondary education and the share of parliamentary seats held by each sex), and the labour market (participation rate of women and men in the workforce). The GII shows the loss in human development due to inequality when comparing the achievements of women and men in the said dimensions. It ranges from zero, where there is a situation of full equality between men and women, to one, when one gender presents the worst performance possible in all the measured dimensions. The importance of this index lies in the fact that it does not merely break down information according to sex but rather analyses this information on the basis of the relations of inequality established between men and women. In other words, it is a gender-sensitive index.

According to the GII, the situation of women was serious in 77 countries, being especially serious in 48 cases.

1. As an analytical category, gender makes it clear that inequalities between men and women are the product of social norms rather than a result of nature, and sets out to underline this social and cultural construction to distinguish it from the biological differences of the sexes. The gender perspective aims to highlight the social construction of sexual difference and the sexual division of work and power. It also attempts to show that the differences between men and women are a social construction resulting from unequal power relations that have been historically established in the patriarchal system. The goal of gender as an analytical category is to demonstrate the historical and situated nature of sexual differences.
3. The reproductive health indicators used in the GII do not have equivalent indicators for men, which means that in this dimension, the reproductive health of girls and women is compared with what should be social objectives, i.e. for there to be no maternal deaths or adolescent pregnancies. UNDP, “Gender Inequality Index”, Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and equality: A better future for all (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
5. This data refers to 2011, which is the most recent year for which data is available.
mainly concentrated in Africa and Asia. The analysis obtained by cross-referencing the data of this indicator with that of countries in a situation of armed conflict reveals that 18 of the 77 countries with a serious situation of gender inequality were embroiled in one or several armed conflicts in 2012. It is necessary to point out that for five of the countries in which there is one or more armed conflicts there is no data available on gender equality (Ethiopia, Nigeria, Palestine, Somalia and South Sudan). This means that 26 of the 38 armed conflicts that took place over the course of 2012 occurred in countries in which there were serious gender inequalities and that six of these conflicts occurred in countries for which there is no available data in this respect. As such, 81% of the armed conflicts for which data was available on gender equality took place in contexts with serious gender inequalities. The gender equality figures remained below the threshold of seriousness established in this report in just four of the countries in which one or more armed conflicts were taking place (Israel, Russia, Thailand and Libya). This reality would seem to coincide with the theory put forward by some authors that gender inequality in a country increases the likelihood of internal armed conflict taking place there. Furthermore, in 39 of the countries with serious inequalities there were one or more socio-political crises. This means that at least 47 of the 91 socio-political crises that remained active in 2012 took place in countries in which there were serious gender inequalities, which represents 52% of the socio-political crises on which data was available.

4.2. The impact of violence and conflicts from a gender perspective

This section focuses on the gender dimension in the cycle of conflict, particularly regarding violence against women. Armed conflicts and socio-political crises are phenomena with a significant gender dimension. First of all, the gender analysis pulls apart the traditional view of armed conflicts as neutral scenarios and brings into question the belief that the genesis of armed conflicts is independent of the power structures in place in certain societies in terms of gender. From this perspective, serious doubts are also raised about statements that attempt to place the consequences of conflicts under the same umbrella without taking into account the gender dimension and inequalities.

a) Sexual violence as a weapon of war

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is widespread in a large number of the armed conflicts currently taking place and is used with the aim of damaging the social fabric of the communities affected by this war crime, as well as causing harm to its women victims that is difficult to repair. Sexual violence has become a key issue on the international agenda regarding the gender dimension in armed conflicts, especially since 2008, following the approval of Resolution 1820 by the UN Security Council. Over the course of 2012, the use of sexual violence as a weapon was recorded in several countries affected by armed conflicts or socio-political crises.

In January the UN Secretary-General presented its report on sexual violence in armed conflicts, in compliance with the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions 1960 (2010), 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009). This is the first report in which detailed information has been compiled on the carrying out of acts of violence in various contexts of armed conflict, post-war scenarios and socio-political crises. The report also includes a list of government and opposition armed actors that are responsible for crimes of sexual violence in these contexts. The report addresses the sexual violence carried out and documented in the period from December 2010 to November 2011, of which a summary is provided in table 4.2.

6. The author of this study is responsible for this classification, not the UNDP. All the countries with scores of between 0.4 and 0.5 are considered to be in a serious situation in terms of gender equality, such situations being considered especially serious in countries with scores of over 0.5.


Sexual violence in contexts of armed conflict, post-war scenarios and socio-political crises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armed conflicts</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Sexual violence, including mass rape, has been prevalent in the conflict and in some instances may have been systematically directed against the civilian population both by the armed forces and armed groups. The Constitutional Court of Colombia recognises that sexual violence is a habitual, widespread, systematic and invisible practice in the conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>Sexual violence took place in North and South Kivu, the scenario of the armed conflict. The report singles out the following responsible parties: 1. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS). 2. The Congolese armed forces (FARDC), including elements incorporated from several armed groups, such as Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda and elements currently led by Bosco Ntaganda. 3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). 4. Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri/ Front populaire pour la Justice au Congo (FRPI/FJUC). 5. Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). 6. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including Mai-Mai Cheka and Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO). The United Nations registered 625 cases of sexual violence: 602 in which the victims were women and girls and 23 in which they were men or boys. Half of the cases were attributed to the armed forces. Meanwhile, 3,527 victims of sexual violence received medical and psychosocial treatment. 250 members of the security forces were put on trial and 150 were sentenced for rape and other forms of sexual violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>Acts of sexual violence were documented against men and women committed by the parties in conflict between February and October 2011. Women were kidnapped from their homes and vehicles or in the street and raped in locations unknown to them, while men were subject to sexual violence in prisons and detention centres. Sexual violence was used to punish opponents of Muammar Gaddafi. Incidents were also reported by followers of Gaddafi currently detained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Rape was committed on a large scale by the armed forces in the militarised ethnic areas, especially in the eastern part of the country. This violence was authorised by military commanders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>The forces of the opposition group al-Shabaab committed sexual violence against women. Most of the victims of sexual violence in the conflict were women and girls living in camps for displaced persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>The sexual violence took place in the camps of the army (SPLA) and in the surrounding areas. The crimes were reported when the armed forces remained in the area for some time without participating actively in the conflict. It also took place during the military operations that the SPLA undertook against militia groups. The report accuses the armed opposition group LRA of perpetrating sexual violence in this country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (Darfur)</td>
<td>There was an increase in the number of cases of violence in the region. Clashes between the Sudanese armed forces and the opposition groups SLA-MM and JEM led to the large-scale displacement of the population, which increased the vulnerability of women and girls. The huge militarisation of the area led to an increase in insecurity. Sexual assaults were reported in the three states of Darfur. Furthermore, the armed forces were accused of attacking displaced women accused of supporting armed groups. UNAMID registered 66 cases of sexual violence involving 111 victims, of which 43 were minors. 17% of the victims identified the government security forces as their attackers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-war contexts</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic and Chad</td>
<td>In these two countries there were constant reports of sexual assaults on women and girls perpetrated mostly by civilians but also by members of the former armed opposition groups. In the Central African Republic, members of the armed opposition group CPJP, zaraguinas (road bandits) and the Ugandan armed group LRA have been identified as the perpetrators of sexual violence. As regards Chad, despite the improvement in camps for refugees and displaced persons, cases of sexual violence continued to be reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>The Secretary-General condemned the impunity in the country in respect of these crimes, and the fact that the victims of sexual violence have been excluded from government rehabilitation programmes. Moreover, even in the cases reported to the police, the perpetrators have not been formally accused of crimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>The report voices concerns about the situation of vulnerability of women and girls in the areas that were affected by the armed conflict, along with the high risk generated by the militarisation of these areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia Herzegovina, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste</td>
<td>The high levels of sexual violence registered in these countries can be traced back to the sexual violence perpetrated during the armed conflicts that affected them. In Liberia mass rapes have become widespread with very young girls among their victims. In Bosnia and Timor-Leste domestic violence has increased significantly. The report highlights that sexual violence prevents the full re-establishment of peace in societies in post-war situations. In Sierra Leone, of the estimated 250,000 cases of sexual violence that took place during the armed conflict, only 3,600 survivors have been registered in order to benefit from reparations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Gender Dimension in Peacebuilding 183
The presentation of the Secretary-General’s report was accompanied by a Security Council debate on this issue. Various civil society organisations highlighted the need for the debate on sexual violence to be accompanied by an analysis of how the proliferation of arms and militarisation contribute to exacerbating this violence and how sexual assaults also undermine women’s chances of participating in the public sphere. Some states (Russia, Pakistan, India, Egypt, China and Indonesia) accused the UN Special Representative of going beyond her mandate since the Secretary-General’s report contains allusions to contexts that are not classified as armed conflicts. However, she declared that all the information presented should be understood within the framework of the provisions of Resolution 1960 (2010).

Meanwhile, reports appeared throughout the year of the use of sexual violence in different contexts of armed conflict and socio-political crises. Some of the places where reports of sexual violence were constant were Somalia, DR Congo and Myanmar, among others.

In Somalia, a United Nations report addressed the grave situation faced by women in terms of gender violence and sexual violence, in particular those displaced as a consequence of the armed conflict.9 The report pointed out that despite the serious difficulties involved in monitoring and documenting the violations of women’s human rights, it can be stated that gender violence is widespread throughout the country and particularly affects women in central and southern areas of Somalia controlled by different actors of the conflict. The violence is heightened by the prevailing climate of impunity and the scant attention paid by the authorities to its prevalence and impact on women’s lives. Internally displaced women are the main victims of this violence and collective assaults are becoming commonplace in shelter camps for displaced persons. Furthermore, according to humanitarian agencies, 30% of the reported cases involve minors. In the areas controlled by the al-Shabaab armed opposition group, its members repeatedly abused women, with practices that included the forced marriage of women and girls with militiamen, on occasions as a way of rewarding insurgents who volunteer to carry out suicide attacks. In the areas under the control of the Federal Transitional Government, both human rights organisations and humanitarian workers declared that rape had become endemic and was perpetrated by uniformed men identified by the victims as soldiers or policemen. The lack of a central government contributed to this climate of violence but the United Nations stated that even in the areas where the authorities were present, the climate of impunity was widespread and victims were denied any access to justice.

In parallel to the information made public by the United Nations, local organisations reported an increase in the number of cases of domestic violence and sexual violence in the camps for displaced persons in Somaliland. In this respect, local organisations have pointed out that the drought has led to a grave deterioration in the population’s living conditions, which in turn has led to increased insecurity.

As regards the situation in DR Congo, there were once again reports of alarming levels of sexual violence in the country. At the start of the year, the then UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, expressed her concern about clashes that had taken place during the first quarter in the east of the country and the effects that they were having on the civilian population. The clashes took place in areas where the widespread perpetration of sexual violence by armed actors against the civilian population had already been reported on previous occasions.

Later on in the year, the international organisation CARE reported the increase of sexual violence in North Kivu, in the east of the country, as a consequence of the escalation of the armed conflict in the region. Fear of this sexual violence is driving women and entire families to move to other areas. Along the same lines, in July the acting UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Vijay Nambiar, reported the serious sexual crimes committed by Mai-Mai militias and the M23 armed group, led by General Bosco Ntaganda. A warrant for his arrest was issued in July by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes including rape and...
sexual slavery, which came on top of a previous arrest warrant for the recruitment of minors as soldiers. At the end of 2012, the Heal Africa local hospital in Goma (capital of North Kivu) stated that more than 5,000 rapes of women and girls had been reported in the province over the course of the year in the context of clashes between government forces and the M23.

In Mali, the human rights organisation HRW stated that there was evidence of women in the north of the country being raped by the Tuareg armed groups operating in the region, in particular the MNLA. These assaults had been on the rise since January. HRW documented cases of rape of women and girls, along with kidnappings in which sexual abuse had probably taken place. Furthermore, women in the area declared that as a consequence of the presence in and control of the area by radical Islamist groups, women’s rights were being brutally restricted due to the application of Sharia law promoted by these organisations. Meanwhile, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict also made declarations in this respect, explaining that several reports of sexual violence in the north of the country had been documented, and underlining the fact that these crimes not only contributed to destabilising the region and constituted serious violations of women’s human rights but could also be classified as war crimes or crimes against humanity.

In the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, the pro-independence news agency Ogaden Online reported the rape of dozens of women in the town of Dig, in Degahbour, in the context of the armed conflict taking place between the Ethiopian army and the armed opposition group ONLF.

Sudanese activists stated that women participating in social protest actions were being subjected to persecution, sexual violence and excessive punishments by the security forces. Incidents included the shooting dead of a girl participating in student protests, the detention and torture in an unknown location of a dozen activists, and reports by several women that they had been sexually assaulted by the security forces during the many protests that had taken place recently in Khartoum. Furthermore, several journalists were prohibited from reporting on the rape of a woman by the security forces, a crime that she had formally reported.

Some organisations and international figures condemned the use of sexual violence as a form of political repression in the conflict taking place in Syria. Various sources pointed out that sexual violence was being used by the state security forces as a form of torture against opposition detainees, both men and women or even minors. Although the scale of its use could not be verified, various human rights organisations stated that they had received constant reports of its use. The human rights organisation HRW declared that in the last year it had documented at least 20 cases of sexual abuse perpetrated by the security forces. Although the organisation states that it has no evidence to confirm that this sexual violence has been specifically ordered by military commanders, it condemns the fact that it has been carried out with total impunity without the authorities doing anything to prevent it.

Colombia was another scenario where sexual violence became a prominent issue over the course of the year. The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, declared that the Colombian government should make greater efforts to put an end to the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence, as well as increase the amount of assistance given to victims and survivors of this violence.

It should be pointed out that in the context of the armed conflict affecting the country, a soldier, sub-lieutenant Raúl Muñoz, was sentenced to 60 years in prison for the rape and murder of a 14 year old girl. This sentence was welcomed by several human rights organisations, which highlighted the exceptional nature of the punishment handed down to a perpetrator of human rights violations. Although the Constitutional Court of Colombia has acknowledged that conflict-related sexual violence is a habitual and widespread practice, most cases are not investigated, let alone punished.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International published a report evaluating the efforts made by the Colombian authorities to combat sexual violence.10 The organisation warned that the formal progress that has taken place in recent months in legal and institutional terms has not yet had any real impact on the lives of women, who continue to face enormous difficulties in gaining access to justice. Furthermore, protection mechanisms remain excessively fragile. Amnesty International states that there is a situation of widespread impunity in respect of the sexual violence perpetrated in the context of the armed conflict. Nevertheless, the organisation saw positive signs in the possibility of a new law being prepared to address the issue of impunity in cases of conflict-related sexual violence, which is being promoted by both parliamentarians and the Office of the Public Ombudsman, which could be the first important step along the way to combating sexual violence effectively.

In Myanmar, the armed forces were accused of the systematic use of sexual violence in the armed conflict being waged with the Kachin armed opposition group KIO in Kachin State. Kachin Women’s Association Thailand documented 43 cases of sexual abuse carried out by the army since the breach of the ceasefire between the KIO and the government in 2011. In 21 cases the victims were murdered. Meanwhile, HRW reported that the murder and rape of members of the Rohingya population had been carried out by the

security forces in the context of the unrest that broke out in the previous quarter in Rakhine State, when the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by three Muslim men led to significant rioting and clashes between the two communities.

Also noteworthy was the increase in the number of cases of sexual violence in Egypt, in particular against women who demonstrated in Tahrir Square in Cairo, the epicentre of the popular uprisings in the so-called Arab Spring. Several women were sexually assaulted by men while they demonstrated in the square. In addition to individual attacks, the assaults on women participating in a meeting to condemn this sexual violence on 8th June must also be mentioned. The protest had to be suspended due to the violence of these assaults. The process of militarisation that the country has undergone and increasing socio-political instability, together with the greater public presence of women, who have become important social actors in the popular uprisings, are some of the factors that may explain the increase in sexual violence against women.

In Haiti, two Pakistani police officers serving as part of the United Nations mission in the country, MINUSTAH, were sentenced by a Pakistani military court to one year in prison and hard labour after being found guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the United Nations pointed out that Pakistan intended to compensate the victims, without stating the amount. The process of militarisation that the country has undergone and increasing socio-political instability, together with the greater public presence of women, who have become important social actors in the popular uprisings, are some of the factors that may explain the increase in sexual violence against women.

Amnesty International published a report in which it condemned the climate of impunity that prevails in Bosnia Herzegovina with respect to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war during the years of conflict. Of the tens of thousands of sexual crimes committed, fewer than 40 cases have been tried, either by local courts or by the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia. Moreover, the victims have constantly been denied access to justice and psychosocial assistance in order to deal with the trauma caused by this violence. Amnesty International points to the constant denials by the political class that these crimes took place and to the lack of political will to combat impunity as the main reasons for explaining why the perpetrators of sexual violence have not been brought to justice.

Box 4.1. Estimates of the impact of sexual violence in quantitative terms

Quantifying the impact of conflict-related sexual violence is an extraordinarily complex task, given the difficulties involved in obtaining reliable figures in this respect. Generally speaking, the impact of sexual violence tends to be underestimated since it is an under-reported crime. The huge difficulties facing victims in terms of gaining access to justice systems, along with the fear of social stigmatisation and even reprisals by the perpetrators, are just some of the obstacles that must be overcome in order to know the true impact of this violence.

Some analysts have pointed out that on most occasions the scale of the impact of sexual violence is underestimated. Some examples of countries where the publicly circulated figures for sexual violence almost certainly underestimate its real impact are Bosnia, Rwanda and DR Congo. In the case of Bosnia, the figure most frequently referred to is that of 20,000 rape cases. However, this figure originally appeared in a 1993 report by the European Commission and the conflict lasted until 1995, which means that it only referred to the sexual violence that took place over part of the conflict. As regards Rwanda, the figure of between 250,000 and 500,000 female victims of sexual violence during the 1994 genocide, provided by the then UN Special Rapporteur for Rwanda, René Degni-Ségui, was calculated on the basis of the number of pregnancies recorded as a consequence of the violence. Nevertheless, a review of these calculations indicates a potentially higher figure. However, there have also been some cases where the opposite has occurred and the violence has been overestimated. One such case is

The Human Security Report 2012 specifically addressed the impact of conflict-related sexual violence, placing special emphasis on the mainstream narrative of this phenomenon and analysing it from a critical perspective on the basis of five elements. First of all, according to the report, this narrative has focused disproportionate attention on the relatively small number of countries in which conflict-related sexual violence was widespread (Bosnia, Rwanda, DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Sudan), extrapolating these levels to armed conflicts as a whole. Secondly, the report points out that from this standpoint it is claimed that sexual violence is on the rise, although little evidence is provided to support such a claim, since, according to the authors of the Human Security Report, what has increased is the reporting of sexual violence. They claim that indirect evidence points to a decrease in sexual violence. Thirdly, the report states that on the basis of this narrative it is argued that strategic rape (the use of rape as a weapon of war) is a pervasive and growing threat, without presenting any evidence to support this claim. Fourthly, the report states that men are presented as perpetrators of sexual violence, while women and girls are presented as the victims. Little is said about sexual violence against males, while female perpetration is ignored almost completely. Finally, the mainstream narrative concentrates on sexual violence perpetrated by combatants while ignoring non-combatant sexual violence, despite the latter being much more widespread than the former, according to the report’s authors.

The report’s conclusions have been heavily criticised by women’s organisations and feminist academics devoted to research into sexual violence as a weapon of war. Many of the criticisms have focused on the conclusions concerning the supposed decrease in conflict-related sexual violence. Various analysts have argued that no evidence exists to affirm that sexual violence is either increasing or decreasing, and that in any case it is not a particularly important debate since the key issue is the existence itself of the violence rather than its impact in quantitative terms. Furthermore, it is pointed out that claims of a decrease may lead to fewer resources being assigned to putting an end to this violence. Meanwhile, these analyses have highlighted that the number of cases that have been monitored is much higher than the one listed by the Human Security Report, including scenarios such as Syria, Libya, Iraq and Somalia, among others. Some authors have also underlined the fact that the Human Security Report only selects some of the research being carried out on this issue, ignoring dozens of contributions made by feminist academics in the 1990s, the conclusions of which enable a much wider panorama to be obtained on this issue.

b) Response to sexual violence used as a weapon of war

The United Nations appointed a new UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, after Margot Wallström, who had held the post since it was created, resigned for personal reasons. She was replaced by Zainab Hawa Bangura, who until then had been health minister of Sierra Leone.

Coinciding with the celebration of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly, UN Women, the UN Special Representative, the International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict and the United Kingdom organised a high-level panel on the prevention of sexual violence. The panel, which included the Nobel Peace Prize recipients Shirin Ebadi, Leymah Gbowee and Jody Williams, along with representatives of 30 civil society organisations, highlighted the need to guarantee access to justice as a form of reparation for victims and to support them in their recovery, as well as combating poverty.

The importance of access to justice was also underlined by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in another event devoted to this issue. The diplomat singled out three vital aspects through which countries must commit to guaranteeing this access: repealing of legislation that discriminates against women and girls, increasing the involvement of women in justice systems and investing at least 15% of the budget devoted to justice in breaking down the obstacles that hinder women’s access. According to UN Women, eight out of ten women in the world do not have access to the formal justice systems in their countries and in more than 100 countries legal inequalities remain in place in aspects such as women’s capacity to sign contracts, travel abroad, manage a property or interact with the public authorities or the private sector.

As regards the work of the ICC, the new chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, who was sworn into office in June, stated that the priority of her mandate would be victims, in particular women and children. This announcement was welcomed by human rights defence organisations and above all by victims, although they also voiced their scepticism about the real possibilities of it being carried out given the budget cuts that have affected the ICC and that directly affect the reparations from which victims may benefit. Also noteworthy was Bensouda’s appointment of Brigid Inder as her new special adviser on gender issues. Inder had until then been the executive director of the organisation Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice, which has been very active in promoting the integration of the gender perspective in the court’s work. Inder replaces the feminist academic Catherine MacKinnon, who has held the post since November 2008.

Meanwhile, in August the ICC issued its first decision concerning reparations for victims in the case of Thomas Lubanga.18 This decision stipulates that the Trust Fund for Victims must guarantee reparations for those who were directly or indirectly harmed as a consequence of the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 as soldiers. The ICC established that the gender dimension should be taken into account and that the reparations should be implemented without committing discrimination for reasons of age, ethnicity or gender and should take into account the fact that the victims may have suffered sexual violence. Furthermore, it stated that among the victims priority must be given to those who have suffered sexual or gender violence.

In parallel, the government of Mali signalled that it intended to ask the ICC to investigate the atrocities committed by the armed groups that occupy the north of the country, which included rape.

In Sierra Leone, the government passed the Law against Sexual Crimes, which includes various categories of such crimes, prohibits forced conjugal sexual relations, aims to protect minors (especially girls) from abuse by traditional or religious leaders and teachers, and increases the sentences for this abuse. Both women’s organisations and the United Nations stressed the importance of this new legislation in a country with high levels of sexual violence that were particularly significant during the years of armed conflict (between 1991 and 2002).

The Congress of Peru passed a law to extend the right to reparation to victims of sexual violence during the armed conflict with Shining Path. The previous legislation only included compensation for rape victims, whereas under the modified law, victims of sexual slavery, kidnappings, forced prostitution and forced abortion may also opt to claim reparations. Some 3,000 women were victims of this sexual violence, perpetrated by the state armed forces (army, navy and police force) and to a lesser extent by insurgent actors (Shining Path and MRTA).

c) Gender violence in contexts of socio-political crisis or armed conflict

In Afghanistan, the UNAMA provided figures of civilian victims of the armed conflict broken down by gender and age, pointing out that during the period between 14 January 2012 and 30 June 2012, of the 3,099 civilian victims (1,145 killed and 1,954 injured), 578 were minors (231 killed and 347 injured) and 347 were women (118 killed and 229 injured). The figures for women and minors represented 30% of the total number of civilian victims, which represented an increase of 1% in respect of the previous period between July and December 2011.

A report by Oxfam revealed that four out of five women in Yemen felt that their lives had worsened in the last year and that the role played by women in the popular uprisings that took place in the country did not lead to an improvement in their situation.19 Furthermore, the grave humanitarian crisis affecting the country is having a serious impact on women, as are the conflicts and insecurity in which the country is immersed, which has led to an increase in gender violence and in forced marriages and child marriage. Furthermore, displaced women have been victims of especially difficult situations and conditions remained too complicated for them to return safely.

In Bolivia, the Legislative Assembly passed the Law against Harassment and Political Violence against Women, promoted by the Association of Bolivian

---


Box 4.2. Structural violence: gender impacts of the global economic crisis

The global economic crisis that began in 2008 is having a gender impact that is difficult to ignore due to the direct consequences that it has generated for the lives of millions of people throughout the world. Some authors coincide in highlighting the strong links that exist between patriarchy and capitalism when searching for the causes of the current situation, caused by the spreading of the crisis in the financial market to all sectors of the economy, pointing out that the financial sector is a hyper-masculine sector that has sustained a sexist economy that has generated profound inequalities.\(^\text{20}\) However, beyond incorporating the gender perspective in the analysis of the causes of this crisis, with respect to the consequences, men and women have been greatly affected by this crisis in terms of unemployment, impoverishment and loss of welfare or restricted access to public services. Nevertheless, these effects have been unequal in terms of gender.

Although it is true that, above all in the early stages, one of the first consequences was the increase in unemployment in predominantly masculine labour sectors,\(^\text{21}\) this reality must be qualified in terms of its geographical and time scope. The increase in male unemployment as a consequence of the crisis in areas such as construction, industry or the automotive sector, with a mostly male workforce, was basically concentrated in industrialised countries and not in countries where the economic importance of these sectors is very small. As such, the impact of the crisis in respect of female employment in other parts of the world was notable from the start, as seen in the huge loss of employment in predominantly female sectors, such as the export-led manufacturing industry.\(^\text{22}\)

Furthermore, the subsequent spreading of the crisis to other economic sectors, basically the public sector, through the policies for cutting social services promoted by international financial institutions, has had a strong impact, with serious repercussions in terms of gender. First of all because this is a labour sector with high female presence, especially in western economies, which has led male and female unemployment rates to level out. Secondly, because the reduction in the provision of social services generates huge repercussions in respect of gender inequality by transferring the provision of these services from the public to the private sphere.\(^\text{23}\) As such, the economic crisis is having a strong impact on the reproductive economy, since it has made inequalities that already existed even more acute.\(^\text{24}\) The double burden borne by many women as a consequence of their participation in the productive and reproductive spheres of the economy has increased for various reasons.\(^\text{25}\) On the one hand, the increase in male unemployment led many women, especially at the onset of the crisis, to be the main breadwinners in their homes. On the other hand, the reduction in public services (healthcare, education, etc.) has transferred the responsibility for these services disproportionately onto women in the private sphere.

This growing gender inequality triggered by the economic crisis can be viewed from the perspective of structural violence against women. The global economic crisis is increasingly impeding the full development of women’s capacities and preventing their basic needs from being met, since it has led to an increase in the amount of time devoted to both productive and reproductive work in conditions of growing precariousness and vulnerability, while at the same time strengthening impoverishment, one of the clearest signs of this violence.

Councilwomen (Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia, ACOBOL) and other women’s organisations in civil society, with the goal of putting an end to this harassment. In recent years there have been more than 4,000 reports of harassment against women who participate in the political sphere, including murder cases. Thanks to the passing of this law, harassment and political violence against women now constitute crimes punishable by the penal code. Meanwhile, the Congress is debating the Violence against Women Law and the incorporation of the crime of femicide in the penal code. The government announced the drafting of a proposal for a law aimed at dismantling the patriarchal system, guaranteeing gender parity and alternation between male and female holders of public and trade union posts.

**d) Participation of women in armed conflict**

With respect to the impact of armed conflict from a gender perspective and to the active participation of women in armed conflicts, the armed opposition group...
Lashkar-e-Toiba created a unit made up exclusively of women, called Dukhtar-e-Toiba, which replaced the existing Dukhtaram-e-Millat, also made up entirely of women. According to Indian intelligence sources, the aim of this organisation is to infiltrate Jammu and Kashmir across the Line of Control.

In June a group of women from the Syrian city of Homs announced the creation of an armed group made up exclusively of women, called the Banat al-Walid battalion. The members stated that they were not linked to any other organisation and that their goal was to assist injured people and refugees, to provide women with training in the use of arms to protect themselves from the militias of the Syrian president, and to ensure that the crimes committed by the regime were reported by the media. The media outlet Asharq Al-Awsat stated that there was evidence that the members of the armed group were doctors and nurses from Homs whose work had been made enormously difficult by the destruction of healthcare facilities.

4.3. Peacebuilding from a gender perspective

This section contains an analysis of some of the most noteworthy initiatives that have been implemented to incorporate the gender perspective within the various spheres of peacebuilding.

a) Resolution 1325

In October the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on women, peace and security to the UN Security Council, in compliance with the provisions of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council of 2000. In the report presented in 2012 the Secretary-General continued his analysis of the achievements accomplished in this respect on the basis of the indicators approved in 2010. The analysis of these indicators focused on the areas of prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery, referring to the achievements accomplished in 2011. The Secretary-General singled out as one of the main obstacles to the achievement of greater progress the fact that there is a great lack of coordination between the information that is sent to the UN Security Council on the situation of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and the response to these problems offered by the body. Nevertheless, Ban Ki-moon pointed to the decrease in the amount of information transmitted to the Security Council as evidence of the fact that fewer reports presented by the UN international missions deployed on the ground contained data on the violation of the human rights of women and girls than in the previous year (79% of reports against 90%). Consequently, only 38% of the Security Council’s resolutions contained references to Resolution 1325. The analysis of other indicators in the report highlighted some significant data, such as the fact that during 2011 102 reports of abuse and sexual exploitation perpetrated by members of the peacekeeping forces were registered. As regards the participation of women in peace processes and the inclusion of the gender perspective in these processes, the report stated that with respect to the 14 peace negotiations in which the United Nations took part in 2011, 12 included women in the mediation support teams but women were only present in four of the delegations that participated in the talks. Meanwhile, of the nine peace agreements signed in 2011, only two of them mentioned the issue of women, peace and security (Somalia and Yemen). With respect to the participation of women in United Nations missions, the report states that of the 28 missions deployed as of 31st December 2011, six were headed by a woman (one more than in mid-2011) and five had women deputy heads (the same number as in the previous period). Furthermore, all the peacekeeping missions and political missions led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations included advisers on gender issues. Notably, the report also stated that of the 12 truth commissions established between 2004 and 2012, only three of them had mandates that included provisions for addressing crimes of sexual and gender violence.

In parallel to the presentation of the report by the UN Secretary-General, the Security Council held its annual debate on women, peace and security, which focused specifically on the role of women’s civil society organisations in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and in peacebuilding. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom claimed that very few new and specific commitments were raised on this issue by the states taking part in the debate. Moreover, despite the fact that most states welcomed the report presented by the Secretary-General, the governments of Russia and China voiced discontent. Russia declared that civil society organisations must only complement the role of the State and stated that National Action Plans must be used on a voluntary basis and only by countries in a situation of armed conflict. Meanwhile, China asserted that the Security Council is not the appropriate forum for drawing up mandates on universal human rights and that national governments are the bodies responsible for safeguarding women’s rights.

b) The gender dimension in peace negotiations

In 2012 important formal peace processes took place in countries such as Somalia, Myanmar, the Philippines or

27. Burundi, Cyprus, Liberia, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Timor-Leste.
28. Burundi, Iraq, DR Congo, Sudan (Darfur) and South Sudan.
Colombia, among others. In all of these processes, women’s organisations pressed for greater involvement in negotiations and for their demands to be considered over the course of the talks between the parties in conflict.

As part of the peace process in Somalia, the Somali constitutional assembly approved a new constitution that recognises equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, guarantees a 30% quota for women in the future parliament and government institutions, and specifically prohibits female genital mutilation, a practice that at its most severe may affect 98% of the country’s women. In the months leading up to the approval of the new constitution, women’s organisations, together with other civil society actors, had carried out various protest actions. In January more than 3,000 women demonstrated in Mogadishu to demand peace in the country. Moreover, the minister for women’s development and family care, Mariam Aweis Jama, and the director for women’s issues in the presidential palace, underlined at that time the need for a greater presence of women in parliament and in ministerial posts, in line with the provisions of the federal transition charter. In February, coinciding with a conference in London on Somalia, Somali women’s organisations in the United Kingdom called on the British prime minister to demand that women were not excluded from the peace process, as well as for the important role that women have played in peacebuilding in Somalia to be recognised. The Somali women condemned the fact that until then all the negotiation processes had been dominated by men, in the case of both Somalis and representatives of the international community. Another noteworthy development was the participation of women in the 2nd Conference on Somalia held on 31st May and 1st June in Istanbul and facilitated by the Turkish government. Other sectors of civil society, such as traditional and religious leaders, young people, representatives of the diaspora and representatives of the private sector also took part. The conference ended with a declaration of support for the road map and the agreements signed to date (Garowe Principles I and II, Galkayo Principles, and the Addis Abeba declaration of 23rd May).

One of the highlights in respect of the various negotiation processes that took place in Myanmar in 2012 was the need expressed by the Women’s League of Burma (WLB) (an umbrella group of 13 women’s organisations of different ethnic groups) for women to be included in the ongoing peace negotiations between the government of Myanmar and the various ethnic insurgencies. The WLB stated that women had been consistently excluded from negotiations with the armed groups until then, pointing out that with the exception of the secretary general of the KNU, Zipporah Sein, no women had participated as leaders in the peace processes. The WLB addressed both the president of Myanmar and the insurgent organisations. Meanwhile, UN Women held training sessions for women from different ethnic groups with the goal of strengthening their capacities with a view to taking part in peace negotiations.

The Women’s League of Burma called for the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations between the government of Myanmar and the ethnic insurgencies

In Afghanistan, Gulali Noor Safi, one of the nine women who form part of the High Peace Council (which has 70 members) claimed that women were being excluded from the decision making processes of this body. Safi declared that they were taking part in some of the council’s activities but not in the most far-reaching political ones. She also condemned the endorsement given by Karzai’s government to a code proposed by religious sectors that allows husbands to beat wives and encourages segregation. Safi affirmed that women are not opposed to negotiating with the Taliban but that guarantees must be provided that women’s rights will not be endangered as a result of these negotiations.

Notable among the positive developments that occurred during the year was the preliminary peace agreement reached between the Philippine government and the armed opposition group MILF, which will put an end to one of the armed conflicts that affect the region of Mindanao.29 The role played by women during the peace negotiations that paved the way for an agreement was significant. Two of the five people who formed part of the government negotiating panel were women, along with four members of its secretariat. Two of the advisers of the MILF were also women. Women and the gender dimension are explicitly referred to twice in the agreement signed in October 2012.30 The first mention recognises women’s right to participate fully in the political sphere as well as their right to be protected from all forms of violence. The second mention recognises the right to equal opportunities and non-discrimination in socio-economic activities and public services regardless of class, beliefs, disability, gender or ethnicity. Various Philippine women’s organisations, in particular those from the region of Mindanao, such as the Mindanao Commission on Women and the Mothers for Peace Movement, welcomed the agreement that had been reached but stressed the importance of women’s participation in its implementation, as well as in the process of post-war rehabilitation. They also demanded the inclusion of women in the institutions that will be created on the basis of the signed agreement and that will oversee the implementation of the provisions listed in the agreement.

The announcement of the start of negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC guerrilla group was welcomed by several Colombian women’s organisations, which gave their backing to a negotiated out-

29. See the summary on Philippines (Mindanao-MILF) in chapter 1 (Armed Conflicts), chapter 3 (Peace Processes) and “The signing of a peace agreement between the government and the MILF in Mindanao” in chapter 5 (Opportunities for Peace in 2013).

come to the armed conflict, demanded the involvement of women in the talks and asked for their demands to be placed on the negotiation agenda. However, concerns were voiced about the complete lack of women in the negotiating teams. Although during the exploratory phase of the process the FARC negotiating delegation included Sandra Ramirez, widow of the historic leader Manuel Marulanda “Tirofijo”, no woman was present among the main negotiators of the government delegation. Finally, the main negotiating teams in the peace talks that took place in Oslo and Havana were entirely composed of men. Some information filtered through of the participation of the Dutch guerilla Tanja Nijmeijer in the Havana talks, although the specific nature of her role remained unknown.

Many analysts and activists expressed their concern in this respect, declaring that an important opportunity had been lost to integrate the gender perspective in the Colombian peace process. In this respect, five women’s organisations (Red Nacional de Mujeres, Alianza Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz-IMP, Corporación de Investigación Social y Económica (CIASE), Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (LIMPAL Colombia) and AFROLIDER) addressed the Colombian president, Juan Manuel Santos, pointing out the importance of peace negotiations in resolving the armed conflict and declaring their support for the negotiation process. However, they recalled the need to take into account women’s contributions as peacebuilders and underlined the importance of their participation in peace negotiations. Furthermore, the Red Nacional de Mujeres presented a series of specific demands in respect of these talks: the observance of a ceasefire during the peace process; the presence of women in the main negotiating teams of the government and the FARC; truth, justice and reparation for victims, specifically for the victims of sexual violence and guarantees that it will not be repeated; and the continuation of the negotiation process until an agreement is reached. Other organisations have pressed for the inclusion of women in the mediation teams of Cuba, Chile, Venezuela and Norway. Meanwhile, the Ruta Pacifica de Mujeres organisation welcomed the announcement by the FARC that it was declaring a two-month ceasefire from November 2012 to January 2013.

The executive director of UN Women, who visited Colombia to take part in the presentation by the government of the National Policy on Gender Equality for Women, expressed her support for the negotiation process, although she also called for the presence of women in the negotiations in order for their specific needs and proposals to be taken into account.

**Women’s organisations in Mali demanded to participate in the negotiations under way as part of the transition process in the country.** A delegation of the REPSFECO/Mali network of organisations attended the negotiations that took in

---

**Sexual violence in ceasefire agreements and peace agreements**

The United Nations Department of Political Affairs published a guide aimed at conflict mediators and their teams in order to address the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and integrate the issue in ceasefire and peace agreements. The guide presents a series of principles that must govern the actions of mediation teams.

With respect to the measures that must be adopted during ongoing hostilities and at the beginning of a mediation process, first of all it is necessary to assess whether there are credible reports of conflict-related sexual violence that may be occurring, or may have occurred. Secondly, it is necessary to actively seek to engage parties to discuss the immediate termination of conflict-related sexual violence, in discussion of other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Finally, consultation with and inclusion of women and gender experts in the process and as part of the mediation team must be ensured.

During the drafting and negotiating of ceasefire and peace agreements, the essential agreement provisions should ensure that sexual violence is included as a prohibited act, especially in the definition or principles of ceasefire. The monitoring for sexual violence must be included in ceasefire agreements, including in relevant annexes. There must be recognition of sexual violence used in conflict as a method and tactic of warfare, as applicable. Furthermore, amnesties for crimes under international law must be prohibited, and arrangements for transitional justice must be included, particularly prosecution, reparations and truth-seeking bodies.

Additionally, the security provisions must ensure that command and control structures and codes of conduct for security actors prohibit conflict-related sexual violence and punish misconduct. Individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence must be excluded from participation or integration into government and the national security system, including armed forces, police, intelligence services and national guard, as well as civilian oversight.

---

place in April in Burkina Faso and urged the president of this country, Blaise Compaoré, the official facilitator of the process, to ensure the presence and participation of women in all the mechanisms and at all levels of the process. Moreover, the women of REPSFECO /Mali (Network of Women for Peace and Security in the ECOWAS region) demanded that urgent measures be adopted to put an end to the sexual violence that is taking place in the north of the country, as well as in order to achieve the unconditional liberation of this area through dialogue and without the use of force. In the months leading up to the negotiations, various women’s organisations had publicly called for the greater participation of women in politics and had initiated a process to develop a road map for the inclusion of female mediators in the resolution of the political crisis in which the country is immersed.

c) Civil society initiatives

In Colombia, the group Mujeres del Mundo Gestoras por la Paz pressed for the release of ten members of the Colombian security forces kidnapped and held by the FARC guerilla group for up to 14 years in some cases. The group, led and promoted by the former Colombian senator Piedad Córdoba and the director of the House of Women in Colombia, Olga Amparo Sánchez, is composed of female politicians and international personalities such as Lucia Topolansky (senator-Uruguay), Jody Williams (Nobel Peace Prize recipient-USA), Alice Walker (writer-USA), Elena Poniatowska (writer-Mexico), Mirta Baravalle (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo-Argentina), Isabel Allende (senator-Chile), Rigoberta Menchú (Nobel Peace Prize recipient-Guatemala), Elsie Mongue (human rights defender-Ecuador), Socorro Gomes (President of the World Peace Council-Brazil), Margarita Zapata (political leader-Mexico), Xiomara Castro de Zelaya (political leader-Honduras) and Nidia Díaz (member of parliament-EI Salvador). This group of women, linked to the organisation Colombianos y Colombianas por la Paz, has been working since February 2011 to urge women to join in calling on the FARC to release those kidnapped. Following the release, they sent letters to the Colombian president, Juan Manuel Santos, and the FARC, urging them to start negotiations to put an end to the armed conflict in which the country is immersed.

In Pakistan, the Women’s Action Forum, an organisation that defends women’s rights, called on the government to resolve the conflict in Balochistan, in line with the wishes and rights of the population of this province. This organisation underlined the important peacebuilding role played by the women of Balochistan and highlighted the need to put an end to the abuse perpetrated by the armed forces and extremist religious groups. Women’s Action Forum stressed that it is striving to achieve a secular Pakistan in which women’s rights are respected.

Meanwhile, Code Pink, the feminist anti-war organisation, campaigned against the use of US drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and took part in the anti-drone march in Pakistan led by the activist Imran Khan. This march condemned the use of drones and the effect that bombings were having on the civilian population in the affected areas. 32

In the Basque Country, women from different political parties published a joint article in the press entitled “A proposal, in feminine plural, to work towards peace”, in which they stressed the need to build peace in the Basque Country on the basis of social plurality. They also referred to the need to construct a memory composed of the different accounts of the conflict, recognising and declaring all the victims. Moreover, they called for a change in Spanish prison policy in order to put an end to the policies of dispersion, as well as to release gravely ill prisoners. Some of the article’s signatories had formed part of the Ahotsak initiative, which in 2006 called for a negotiated outcome to the conflict. Ahotsak was formed by women from all the political parties in the Basque Country, with the exception of the Popular Party (PP) as well as from different social, cultural and trade union sectors.

In Serbia, the Women in Black organisation announced that it would carry out actions to mark the 20th anniversary of the Bosnian Serb siege of Sarajevo, which lasted for almost four years and in which 11,500 people were killed, including 1,600 minors. The Serbian women demand ac-

---

countability for what occurred, a demand that is considered an act of treason by many sectors of Serbian society.

Dozens of representatives of women’s organisations in Syria met in Cairo at the Syrian Women’s Forum for Peace, with the goal of strengthening the network of civil society organisations in order to promote national dialogue for a peaceful outcome to the conflict.

The organisation Azzad Jammu & Kashmir Women for Peace Organisation and the Centre for Dialogue Reconciliation held the Intra-Kashmir Cross-LoC Women’s Dialogue, in which women from the regions of Azad Kashmir (administered by Pakistan) and Jammu and Kashmir (administered by India) took part. The participants demanded greater flexibility in the conditions for moving from one region to another, as well as the consolidation of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, the gradual demilitarisation of the area (including the Siachen glacier and its declaration as a peace park) and justice for victims of the conflict, in particular widows and “half-widows”\(^{33}\), missing persons, displaced persons and refugees. They also pressed for the setting up of an independent Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an end to human rights violations and the repeal of anti-terrorism legislation.

Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, a campaign was launched entitled “16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence”, which has been held in recent years on this date. The motto of the 2012 campaign, in which 4,100 organisations from 172 countries took part, was “From peace in the home to peace in the world: let’s challenge militarism and end violence against women!”. The campaign mainly focused on the role of state actors as perpetrators of gender violence and sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict scenarios, and the proliferation of light weapons and their role in domestic violence.

d) International agenda

In July the negotiations for the approval of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) concluded unsuccessfully due to the refusal of five countries (the US, Cuba, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela) to sign a text that was actually less ambitious than the one originally promoted. The women’s organisation that had campaigned to promote the prohibition of the sale of conventional arms to places where there is a risk of them being used to perpetrate or facilitate acts of gender violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, condemned the lack of political will of the states that finally blocked the agreement. Nevertheless, they welcomed the will shown by a large number of governments to support the inclusion of references to gender issues. The references were supposed to appear in the preamble and in one of the articles of the treaty.

Four civil society organisations\(^{34}\) had called for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to take into account the gender dimension and the specific gender impacts of the arms trade. The organisations declared that the risk of arms being used to perpetrate or facilitate acts of gender violence must be evaluated on the basis of establishing effective regulation systems that enable the control of arms and the prevention of gender violence, taking into account the evidence on the existence of gender violence. They underlined the fact that arms sales have consequences from a gender perspective. These include the systematic use of sexual violence against the civilian population in armed conflicts; the use of arms by states to carry out repression (including sexual violence against the opposition); or the disproportionate effect of these arms on women in some countries due to high rates of homicides and domestic violence involving firearms.

The Rio+20 United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development was held in June. Women’s organisations joined environmental organisations in labelling the document that was finally approved a failure and step backwards. As far as the gender perspective is concerned, the most noteworthy development was the failure to recognise sexual and reproductive rights as a key component of sustainable development, a deliberate omission that represents a blow for the advancement of women’s rights. The women’s organisations that were present at the summit stated that sexual and reproductive rights represent one of the most effective paths towards women’s empowerment, with effects on sustainable development and the reduction of climate change. Criticism was also levelled at aspects such as the promotion of the so-called green economy, which according to several civil society organisations represents nothing more than an image campaign for governments with no beneficial effect on the environment, on sustainable development or on the reduction of poverty. They also criticised the fact that in the final document no mention is made of the use of nuclear energy and radioactive pollution.

At the summit, UN Women brought together various female heads of state and government, who called for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in order to promote sustainable development. However, they made no mention in their statement of the issue sexual and reproductive rights.

Meanwhile, the presidents of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and of Malawi, Joyce Banda, the only two African heads of state, agreed to work together to promote African women’s rights and to improve their living conditions as part of the Women’s Decade approved by the AU in 2010. The person responsible for gender issues in the regional organisation welcomed the decision and declared that the resources held by the AU for the fulfilment of the objectives of the aforementioned Decade would be made available to the presidents.

\(^{33}\) A large number of women are de facto widows whose status has not been formally recognised. These women are known as half-widows. According to Muslim legislation, a missing person cannot be declared dead until seven years have gone by, which also prevents the wife from inheriting property or remarrying during this period.

\(^{34}\) Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, IANSA, Amnesty International and Religions for Peace International.