

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the eve of the 25th Anniversary: Challenges for Feminist Peacebuilding

María Villellas, Pamela Urrutia and Ana Villellas

Researchers at the Escola de Cultura de Pau of the UAB

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Summary

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and in an international context of serious crises and interconnected structures of oppression, this publication highlights five challenges and problems the WPS agenda faces. These five dimensions are: growing militarism and military spending; the climate emergency resulting from an extractivist and predatory neoliberal capitalist model, and its gender impacts; the repression against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and other civil society groups; the neglect of the prevention of armed conflicts and inclusive dialogue as ways of addressing conflicts; and the co-optation of the WPS agenda. This publication addresses the five challenges and incorporates recommendations on each of them.

Throughout these two and a half decades, the WPS agenda has built a normative framework and a series of tools to integrate the gender perspective in the approach to conflict and peacebuilding around four pillars: the role of women in conflict prevention, their participation in peacebuilding, the protection of rights during and after conflict, and specific needs in post-war processes. The agenda has generated normative commitments for governments, the United Nations and other actors in relation to these areas. However, in all these years its limitations have also been revealed, largely due to the lack of will by the States for a real implementation, which would give centrality to the needs and priorities identified by local women's organizations and other actors of civil society. The deployment of the agenda has not been accompanied by substantive material resources by States or intergovernmental organizations, and neither has it transcended the compartmentalized focus, without policy coherence.

Introduction

The year 2025 will mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS agenda). It began with the approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and as a result of the pressure from women's organizations and activists from the Global North and South that denounced militarization, the gendered impacts of war and the exclusion of women in decision-making processes related to conflict and peace. 2025 will also mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, which, by including "women and armed conflict" among the 12 areas of critical concern, gave visibility to the issue and preceded the WPS agenda.

The international panorama is one of serious crises and interconnected structures of oppression. The climate emergency resulting from an extractivist neoliberal economic model, is one of the main threats to human and planetary security, with specific impacts on populations affected by discrimination and previous inequality. In parallel, Israel's genocide against the people of Gaza and the Russia-Ukraine war have upended the lives of millions of civilians, placing global statistics on conflict fatalities among the highest levels since the end of the Cold War, while military spending –at the highest levels recorded by SIPRI¹– and arms transfers continue to make it possible to access the weapons that facilitate and prolong armed conflicts and the violations of rights that occur in them, including of women and other population groups.

1. SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 2024: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Oxford University Press, 2024.

In this context of the upcoming anniversary and the seriousness of the international panorama, this publication focuses on five challenges and problems the WPS agenda faces. These five dimensions are: growing militarism and military spending; the climate emergency resulting from an extractivist and predatory neoliberal capitalist model, and its gender impacts; the repression against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and other civil society groups; the neglect of the prevention of armed conflicts and inclusive dialogue as ways of addressing conflicts; and the co-optation of the WPS agenda. On the 22nd anniversary of the agenda, the Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace) identified five challenges and recommendations in a previous publication.² Although all of them are still fully valid, on this occasion, we reiterate two of them due to their particularly relevant and worrying nature: the increase in militarization and military expenditures and the climate emergency. This publication also incorporates recommendations on each of these five challenges.

A more militarized and armed world

The global landscape of armed conflict continues to deteriorate, with an increased number of armed conflicts and higher levels of militarism and militarization. In 2023, 36 armed conflicts were recorded, the highest number since 2014. Almost half of them (47%) were of high intensity (compared to 28% ten years earlier)³ and the year 2024 shows new deteriorations, such as the crises in the Middle East. On the other hand, violent deaths in situations other than armed conflict, such as intentional killings related to criminal, interpersonal or socio-political activities, remained at very high levels (440,000 deaths per year from intentional killings in 2019-2021, compared to 94,000 deaths from conflict and 22,000 from terrorism, according to UNODOC). The last decade has been the deadliest in conflicts that do not involve governments,⁴ such as violence associated with actors linked to organized crime.

The WPS agenda has built a normative framework, but the limitations have also been highlighted given the lack of will of States for real implementation

In both types of violence, weapons play a key role as a facilitator and, moreover, armed violence continues to be gender-driven. Militarism, militarization and war intensify gender and other inequalities and are supported by patriarchal gender stereotypes that normalize the culture of violence. The sexual and reproductive health impacts of Israel's bombardment of Gaza on Palestinian women or the mass arrests and torture of Palestinian civilian men presenting them as alleged irregular combatants⁵ are expressions of these links.

The role of arms in the deteriorating international panorama and the militarism-patriarchy links are strongly manifested. In armed conflicts, civilian casualties in 2023 rose to at least 33,443 (72% higher than 2022) and the deaths of women doubled and those of minors tripled (largely due to the crisis in Gaza).⁶ 90% of the fatalities or injuries from explosive weapons against densely populated areas are civilians, with cases such as Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, Russia-Ukraine and Yemen standing out for their severity.⁷ A UNIDIR study with data from six countries showed that between 70% and 90% of incidents of sexual violence related to armed conflict involved the use of weapons, especially firearms.⁸

Firearms are the main mechanism used in homicides globally (47% on average, and up to 67% in the Americas).⁹ The majority of perpetrators and victims of homicide are men (81% of male and boy victims globally in 2021). Delving into the elements at work in these man-to-man killings is crucial, according to UNODOC, to understand global and regional trends.¹⁰ Women are disproportionately affected by homicides caused by intimate partners or other family members. 56% of women victims of homicides in 2021 were due to this typology (11% in the case of men).¹¹ And although femicides are mostly not committed with firearms, for a decade now, UNODOC pointed out that firearms are frequently displayed to intimidate, threaten or coerce women.¹²

2. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Cinco retos para la agenda género, paz y seguridad*, Apunts ECP de Conflictos i Pau, no. 17, October 2022.

3. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

4. Davies, S., Engström, G., Petterson, T., & Öberg, M., *Organized violence 1989–2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 61(4), 673-693, 2024.

5. Amnesty International, *Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza*, AI, 18 July 2024.

6. UN Secretary-General, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/385, 14 May 2024.

7. Ibid.

8. Salama, H. "Sexual violence in conflict and weapons: unpacking the links for better prevention", *Humanitarian Law & Policy*, ICRC, 28 September 2023.

9. UNODOC, *Global Study of Homicide 2023*, 2024.

10. Ibid. Among other recommendations, this organization proposes working with young men to prevent them from being attracted to the "subculture of violence of organized crime groups" or others.

11. Ibid. According to UNODOC, another 40% of homicides of women lack information about the relationship between victim and perpetrator, so the percentage of homicides caused by intimate partners or other family members could be even higher.

12. UNODOC, *Indirect impacts of firearms on states or communities*, UNODOC Teaching Module Series: Firearms.



Photo source: WILPF

At the same time, there is also a serious escalation in global military spending. In 2023 it reached \$2.4 trillion, increasing for the ninth consecutive year and with an increase of 6.8% compared to the previous year. Between 2019 and 2023, the volume of international transfers of major arms was 3.3% lower than in 2014-2018, but 3.2% higher than between 2009-2013, according to SIPRI. This centre points out that in the coming years the volume could be maintained or increased, due to the increase in conflicts and tensions, which is one of the main factors that lead states to buy weapons.¹³ The US, France, Russia, China and Germany are the main exporting countries, responsible for 76% of the volume of exports, in a list in which the 25 largest suppliers account for 98% of transfers. Other worrying dynamics of militarization also include the erosion by some States of multilateral arms control mechanisms;¹⁴ greater militarisation of borders; plans to expand the number of Armed Forces in many European countries; among others.

Disarmament has been a persistent theme in feminist pacifist activism and on its agendas. Feminisms, from different fields (activism, academia or others), have unravelled the links between patriarchy and militarism.¹⁵

The global landscape of armed conflict continues to deteriorate, with an increased number of armed conflicts and higher levels of militarism and militarization

However, as O'Rourke points out, although feminist antimilitarism was central to the advocacy process that resulted in the approval of the WPS agenda, the formal agenda has been far from those objectives.¹⁶ References to disarmament in Security Council resolutions are scarce and the fact that illegal arms flows are rooted in legal arms transfers remains unaddressed.¹⁷ In the context of global challenges and lessons learned to date, proposals are emerging aimed at shifting the advocacy efforts of the Security Council to other fora, such as the UN General Assembly, which is a more conducive environment for addressing issues such as disarmament and for feminist advocacy on the structural causes of conflicts, in the face of militarism, veto power and other limitations of the Security Council.¹⁸ In any case, feminist organizations such as WILPF have been advocating for years on the issues of disarmament and gender in the UN General Assembly and in fora linked to political processes and international treaties.¹⁹

On the other hand, at the state level, in 2023, only 31% of national action plans on the WPS agenda had direct references to arms control, ammunition management and/or disarmament.²⁰ In addition, states continue to be non-transparent in relation to the arms trade and

13. SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 2024: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, 2024.

14. Ibid.

15. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Cinco retos para la agenda género, paz y seguridad*, Apunts ECP de Conflictes i Pau, no. 17, October 2022.

16. O'Rourke, Catherine, "Disarming the Women, Peace and Security agenda: the case for centring the United Nations General Assembly", *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, Volume 29, Issue 1, Spring 2024, Pages 1–20.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. For more information, see WILPF's disarmament programme: *Reaching Critical Will*.

20. UN Secretary-General, *Women, Peace and Security. Report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/725*, 28 September 2023; and UN Women, "National and regional strategies for advancing women's peace and security" in *Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security*.

their obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).²¹ As civil society has denounced, in official meetings related to the ATT, States Parties rarely address issues of implementation and enforcement of the prohibitions and risk assessments arising from Articles 6 and 7,²² including Article 7(4) which mandates an assessment of the risk that exported weapons will be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.

Overall, it is urgent to strengthen the promotion of disarmament in the WPS agenda. As part of this, governments –including EU governments– must stop exporting arms to countries in situations of armed conflict, tension or serious human rights violations. Specifically, they should implement Article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty and strengthen transparency and exchange of lessons learned on the implementation of this and other articles of the treaty. Civil society pressure in this area remains critical to achieving progress and accountability.

The climate crisis worsens

In recent years, the global climate crisis has worsened. The World Meteorological Organization noted that “climate change indicators reached unprecedented levels in 2023” and its latest available report highlights that this year was the warmest on record and also saw records for ocean temperature, sea level rise, loss of Antarctic sea ice and glacier retreat.²³ There is no doubt, therefore, that one of the most serious crises humanity faces today is that which has to do with the consequences of changes in the climate. These shifts in turn cause the worsening of the security conditions in which a large part of the world’s population lives, especially in the territories most vulnerable to these impacts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes in its 2023 conclusions that vulnerable communities that have historically contributed the least to climate change are being disproportionately affected. This worsening leads to impacts on gender inequalities and gender-specific consequences, which have been extensively researched and documented. Multiple studies

It is urgent to strengthen the promotion of disarmament in the WPS agenda, in a context of serious escalation of military spending and an increase in high-intensity armed conflicts



Photo source: KennyHo

have highlighted the disproportionate impacts of extreme weather events on women as a result of inequality.

Gender inequalities lead to specific climate vulnerability for women due to factors such as their reduced access and control over resources such as land, credit or education.²⁴ Women in the Global South, racialised women or women with fewer economic resources are some of the groups that suffer the most from the most adverse consequences of the climate crisis and, at the same time, are least responsible for its worsening. In situations of armed conflict, the consequences of climate change are coupled with the devastation generated by violence, which can lead to a significant increase in gender inequalities and a considerable deterioration in women’s living conditions. In parallel to the consequences of climate change and its impacts on gender inequalities, there is an increase in violence against women environmental defenders, with practices of repression, criminalization, displacement and even murders. Ecocide²⁵ intersects with gender inequalities, through specific forms of violence against women environmental defenders,²⁶ perpetrated by armed actors, often with economic interests linked to the plundering of the environment and natural resources.

21. Control Arms, *Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. ATT Transparency & Reporting. Delivered by: Kelsey Gallagher, on behalf of the ATT Monitor*, 2023.

22. Control Arms, *Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. Treaty Implementation. 22/23 August 2023. Delivered by: Frank Slijper (PAX)*, 2023.

23. World Meteorological Organization, *State of the Global Climate 2023*, WMO-No. 1347, 2024.

24. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Cinco retos para la agenda género, paz y seguridad*, Apunts ECP de Conflictos i Pau, no. 17, October 2022.

25. The Panel of Independent Experts for the Legal Definition of Ecocide has defined ecocide as “unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.”

26. Tran, D., Hanaček, K. “A global analysis of violence against women defenders in environmental conflicts”, *Nature Sustainability* 6, 1045–1053, 2023.

While the links between armed conflict, global insecurity, and climate change are complex and multidirectional, there are some aspects that are particularly noteworthy from a feminist perspective. Organisations such as WILPF have pointed to the links between patriarchal militarism and the worsening of the climate crisis, due to, among other aspects, the disproportionate use of fossil fuels by armies.²⁷ Fossil fuels would be a factor present in most armed conflicts in recent decades.²⁸ This is particularly worrying in a context of increasing militarization and the impact of armed conflict.

From a feminist peacebuilding perspective, it is important to question security approaches to climate change from a critical perspective, which considers environmental protection and efforts to end the global climate crisis as peacebuilding tools. These efforts must incorporate the feminist contributions that for decades have united the knowledge and actions of pacifism and environmentalism. A study carried out by the Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security and PRIO shows that there is a strong correlation between a better status of women in society and peace, democracy, climate resilience and justice.²⁹ The emphasis must therefore be on strengthening the transformative capacities of women and other traditionally excluded populations. In 2022, the School for a Culture of Peace pointed to the need to improve the integration of the climate justice and WPS agendas. This is a pending challenge, which must guide the action of States, through the approval of radical climate policies that provide responses at the height of the seriousness of the eco-social crisis that humanity is going through and that allow the complete transformation of the patriarchal economic and military system that sustains and increases this crisis.

Repression against women peacebuilders, activists and human rights defenders

A persistent problem and challenge is the increase in repression against women peacebuilders, activists and



Photo source: Naciones Unidas

Ecocide intersects with gender inequalities, through specific violence against women environmental defenders perpetrated by armed actors with economic interests

defenders of women’s human rights and LGBTIQ+ activists. Women’s organizations and human rights organizations have repeatedly denounced for years the reduction of the space for protest and for the peacebuilding proposals coming from feminism, and the persecution and criminalization of civil society. In conflict, post-conflict and crisis contexts, women human rights defenders face systemic and structural discrimination, deprivation of economic rights, harassment and violence, including sexual violence.³⁰

The trend of repression against women defenders and activists appears to have increased. 75% of women and queer activists participating in a survey by Kvinna till Kvinna for its annual report on the status of women human rights defenders, said that they and/or their organizations had been harassed or threatened in the past two years as a result of their activism, which represented a 15% increase from the previous survey in 2021.³¹ The most frequent kinds of abuse reported by activists were harassment in different forms (47%), smear campaigns and false accusations (34%), restrictive regulations and legislation (28%), death threats (24%), excessive administrative or bureaucratic burdens (23%) and criminalisation

27. Arnal Calvo, B. *Hacia una política climática libre de combustibles fósiles. Aportes desde el feminismo pacifista. Informe de investigación y recomendación de políticas*, WILPF Spain, September 2024.

28. Ibid.

29. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24: Tracking sustainable peace through inclusion, justice, and security for women*. Washington, DC: GIWPS and PRIO, 2023.

30. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders - Pathways to peace: women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict and crisis-affected settings*, A/78/131, 7 July 2023.

31. Kvinna till Kvinna, *Hope and resistance go together. The state of women human rights defenders 2023*, November 2023.

of activism through legislation (21%). As part of the harassment, sexual harassment was identified as one of the main strategies to silence activists.

According to the data collected by Kvinna till Kvinna, the main perpetrators of the harassment were governments and authorities, indicated by 58% of the interviewees. Other actors identified were traditional and community leaders (42%), religious actors (39%), anti-gender movements (38%), far-right or extremist groups (32%), political parties (31%), internet trolls (28%) and family members (27%). Threats from anti-gender and far-right movements have also increased significantly compared to 2021, according to the NGO.

These dynamics of persecution occur in a global context in which many governments are eroding sexual and reproductive rights and rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Furthermore, there is insufficient addressing of gender-based violence, intensification of discrimination against women and girls by some governments, alarming global levels of gender-based violence, and increase in attacks against LGBTIQ+ people in various countries.³² In addition, there are also trends of erosion of democracy and an increase in practices of persecution of dissent by repressive governments on the international scene.³³ Particularly serious are the cases in Afghanistan and Iran, where governments are carrying out extreme repression against women, which have come to be described as “gender apartheid”. At the same time, the international community instrumentalizes support for Afghan and Iranian women in the relationship with these governments. Likewise, in the context of divisions and global geopolitical confrontation, various governments instrumentalize and turn the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population into a battlefield for their own interests by using different narratives.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders has also warned that specific references and measures to support and protect women human rights defenders in the agenda’s national action plans

The main perpetrators of the harassment against activists were governments and authorities, according to civil society data

Women’s organizations from multiple countries have called on States to defend women’s rights and support feminist movements and zero tolerance for all forms of attacks

remain limited. She highlights that the focus of States in participation must be accompanied by measures to prevent attacks and threats,³⁴ identifies protection gaps pointed by women defenders and has issued operational recommendations to States. Women’s organizations from multiple countries have called on States to defend women’s rights, support feminist movements and zero tolerance for all forms of attack, intimidation or retaliation against women activists, defenders or politicians, and recall that women’s movements are at the core of the WPS agenda.³⁵ This demand goes hand in hand with other interrelated demands, in areas such as conflict prevention, disarmament, women’s participation in peace negotiations, justice and accountability, and financing of peace and not war, among others.³⁶

The loss of centrality of prevention and participation in the agenda

The WPS agenda has been developed in recent years as a peacebuilding tool, with proposals and actions aimed at assisting victims of conflicts, integrating the gender perspective in peacebuilding efforts, and establishing guarantees for women’s participation in all areas of peacebuilding. The WPS agenda was born as a conflict prevention agenda, considering that building peace and the full achievement of women’s rights and the elimination of gender inequalities must go hand in hand.³⁷ However, in a context of growing armed conflict worldwide, in which both the number of armed conflicts and the number of high-intensity conflicts are increasing, the conflict prevention efforts promoted by the WPS agenda have not been increased, nor have clear guarantees for women’s right to participation in peacebuilding been consolidated.

The emergence of tools such as the UN Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace contrasts with the militaristic response of states to crises of violence

32. Amnesty International, *The State of the World’s Human Rights*, AI, April 2024.

33. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Global State of Democracy Report 2024. Strengthening the Legitimacy of Elections in a Time of Radical Uncertainty*, International IDEA, 2024.

34. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders - Pathways to peace: women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict and crisis-affected settings*, A/78/131, 7 July 2023.

35. NGOWGWPS, *2024 Open Letter to the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations on the eve of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security*, 8 October 2024.

36. Ibid.

37. Although the feminist agendas of civil society organizations had more ambitious objectives such as questioning militarism, the negotiation for it to materialize in a Security Council resolution resulted in the contents of resolution 1325 that do not question the international militarist patriarchal system.

and inaction in the face of some of the most serious human rights violations in recent years, such as the invasion of Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza or the armed conflict in Sudan, to cite some of the crises with the greatest impact on the civilian population that is suffering them. This UN's New Agenda for Peace could be a good platform to strengthen the active and meaningful participation of women and civil society in peacebuilding at the international level. This agenda makes a clear commitment to the dismantling of patriarchal power structures (terminology used by the UN Secretary General) and identifies some threats to peace that are clearly relevant to women and civil society in general, such as violence that does not take place in classic armed conflict, the reduction of spaces for participation for civil society, the climate emergency, among others. The agenda is also committed to global solutions aimed at addressing the root causes of violence and not prioritising security responses. However, the proposals contained in the New Agenda for Peace suffer from vagueness and lack of specificity and contrast with the forcefulness of the context analysis.³⁸

The UN's New Agenda for Peace could be a platform to strengthen the active and meaningful participation of women and civil society in peacebuilding at the international level

At the same time, women's participation in peacebuilding, and more specifically in peace negotiations, is totally at risk. Although 2014, 2015 and 2016, coinciding with the peace negotiations in the Philippines (between the government and the MILF armed group) and Colombia (between the government and the FARC) saw some progress in participation as a result of civil society advocacy efforts and the positive response of some governments, in recent years women's participation at the negotiating tables continues to be very limited and a meaningful integration of gender perspective into negotiations is not taking place. According to the 2023 UN Secretary-General's report,³⁹ in 2022, women participated as negotiators or delegates of the parties to the conflict in four of the five peace negotiations that were led by the UN. The percentage of women's representation in negotiating delegations that included women was 16%, down from 19% in 2021 and 23% in 2020. Participation in peace processes in which the UN did not play a leading role was even lower. The UN Secretary-General's 2024 report noted that after analysing more than 50 processes in 2023, on average, women made up only 9.6% of negotiators,

13.7% of mediators and 26.6% of signatories of peace and ceasefire agreements. Moreover, for signatories to agreements, this proportion drops to 1.5% if Colombia's agreements are excluded.⁴⁰

Along with this exclusion that affects women involved in the field of negotiation, diplomacy and political leadership, the international context has also become hostile for the feminist movement and the defence of women's rights: advance of the extreme right, misogynistic governments, threats to women human rights defenders, environment defenders and peacebuilders. Thus, the dimensions of violence prevention and participation in peacebuilding have been neglected and weakened after more than two decades of implementation of this agenda. The NGOWGWPS has also warned of a reduction in the last three years in the appearances of women from civil society organizations before the UN Security Council, a practice that had been consolidated in this institution since 2015.⁴¹ It is urgent, therefore, to recover the centrality of these two axes –prevention and participation– for the full implementation of the WPS agenda

in global peacebuilding policies. Women's representation must be guaranteed in all peacebuilding spaces and the international community itself must lead by example by promoting the participation of women in mediation and facilitation tasks. It is essential that the discussion agendas include specific points related to the protection of the rights of women and LGBTQ+ people, as well as the proposals originating from the women's movement itself, to ensure transformations that impact on structural gender inequalities.

The co-optation of the WPS agenda, further away from feminist peace

The WPS Agenda was born in 2000 with the aim of strengthening the integration of the principles of gender equality and the proposals of feminist and pacifist organizations in peacebuilding and thanks to the impulse of civil society organizations. However, in the more than two decades of deployment, the implementation and development of the agenda has faced attempts at co-optation by governments, which have diverted the central

38. Acheson, R., *Review of A New Agenda for Peace's Recommendations for Disarmament and Demilitarisation*, Reaching Critical Will, July 2023

39. UN Secretary-General, *Women and peace and security. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2023/725, 28 September 2023.

40. UN Secretary-General, *Women and Peace and Security. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/671, 24 September 2024.

41. Fessatidis, A., *Protecting Participation: Women civil society at the UN Security Council (January 2023–September 2024)*, NGOWGWPS, 21 October 2024.

focus from a peacebuilding agenda to an agenda of incorporation of women in the field of security forces. In addition, implementation processes have often been marked by colonial and racist logics. Throughout the two decades of its existence, rather than an instrument agreed upon by all the actors responsible for its development and implementation, power inequalities have tipped the balance towards a bureaucratized implementation at the service of the interests of governments that have often instrumentalized the WPS agenda with weak and unspecified commitments that have contributed to improving their image abroad but that have failed to challenge the structural causes of armed conflict and gender-specific impacts.

Governments' implementation of the WPS agenda has failed to call into question the structural causes of armed conflict and gender-specific impacts

In recent years, different governments have adopted a framework for their international policy known as the “Feminist Foreign Policy” (FFP).⁴² Following in the footsteps of Sweden, which in 2014 was the first country to adopt this label, countries such as Canada, Spain, Mexico, Chile, France and Luxembourg, among others, have adopted strategies and defined their foreign policy as feminist.⁴³ The FFP emerges almost 15 years after the beginning of the WPS agenda and in part it draws from the impetus that this agenda provided to the incorporation of the gender equality principles into peace and security policies. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs have been the actors with the main responsibilities in the implementation of the WPS agenda and, therefore, both agendas converge, not only in terms of their content but also in the actors responsible for

their execution and dissemination. On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325, the FFP seems to be gaining greater prominence as a framework for action for some governments. In fact, the broad umbrella provided by the FFP would seem to be an adequate framework for the implementation of the WPS agenda, which is more restrictive in terms of its framework for action. However, the expansion of the FFP framework does not appear to have strengthened the implementation of the feminist peacebuilding agenda. Peace policies are not occupying a central place in government action plans and, on the contrary, the risk of invisibilization of the WPS agenda is accentuated in an international context marked by high-intensity armed conflicts, the increase in military spending and armaments by many governments, including countries that have adopted FFPs.

To respond to the current international context marked by growing armed conflict, governments should commit to public peace policies that put the contributions of women's organisations in contexts affected by violence at the centre. In this regard, more than 600 civil society organizations from 110 countries presented in October 10 proposals that should permeate the implementation of the WPS agenda and any FFP:⁴⁴ 1) Prevent, avert and end conflicts; 2) reform the Security Council; 3) stop arms transfers; 4) defend women's human rights; 5) advance reproductive justice; 6) insist on women at the table; (7) support principled humanitarian action; 8) demand justice and accountability; 9) stand with feminist movements; and 10) fund peace, not war.

42. Although there is diversity on what allows a foreign policy to be defined as feminist, some experts have pointed out that it would be “the policy of a State that defines its interactions with other States, as well as with movements and other non-State actors, in a way that prioritizes peace, gender equality and environmental integrity; enshrine, promote and protect the human rights of all persons; seek to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal, and male-dominated power structures; and allocate significant resources, such as research, to achieve that vision. Feminist foreign policy has a coherent approach in all its mechanisms of influence, anchored in the exercise of those values at the national level and created together with feminist activists, groups and movements, at home and abroad” (Thompson, L. and Clement, R. (2019). *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

43. UN Women, *In Brief. Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction*, 2022.

44. NGOWGWS, *2024 Open Letter to the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations on the eve of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security*, 8 October 2024.

10 THINGS THE SECURITY COUNCIL CAN DO TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

1. Prevent, avert and end conflict.
2. Reform the Security Council.
3. Stop arms transfers when they may be used to commit acts of gender-based violence.
4. Defend women's human rights.
5. Advance reproductive justice.
6. Insist on women at the table.
7. Support principled humanitarian action.
8. Demand justice and accountability.
9. Stand with feminist movements.
10. Fund peace, not war.

NGO WORKING GROUP
ON WOMEN, PEACE
AND SECURITY
20+ YEARS OF ADVOCACY

Source: NGOWGWPS



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UAB
Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

Escola de Cultura de Pau
Edifici B13, Carrer de Vila Puig,
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona 08193
Bellaterra (Spain)
Tel: +34 93 581 14 14
pr.conflict.escolapau@uab.cat
escolapau.uab.cat

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