Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls

The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO’s Gender Team in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.

Jenny Lorentzen from the PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update met with Hilde Klemetsdal, Counselor at the Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN, to get her account of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Having participated in the negotiations on behalf of the Norwegian Government, can you describe the atmosphere at this year’s Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)?

This year’s CSW showed that the international climate for negotiations is characterized by some actors trying to create an image that there is a contrast between traditional, cultural, and religious values and human rights, portraying human rights as a “Western” concept. This is of course nothing new, but we experience it as more prominent after the Arab spring.

We see that there are new regional powers emerging, and some conservative powers are more vocal. This is a setting we are increasingly forced to accept. Despite these issues, there was a general feeling of strong will to agree on an outcome document. We were also happy to note that the number of like-minded states is growing across all regions.

What were the difficult issues?

Particularly difficult were issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. This was a very important issue for South Africa, where they experience a big problem with corrective rape. The South African representative gave a touching statement on the issue, and at one point the whole room burst into spontaneous applause. It was the only time I remember
that happening. However, it was clear from the beginning that these were very controversial issues that would be hard to reach agreement on.

The contrasts between religious values and human rights, and between national sovereignty and universal rights, were also apparent from the very beginning. The opponents use national sovereignty as an argument to push back, and we had to include the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds in one paragraph. Religious organizations are very influential actors and regardless of religious belonging, some of them represent strong powers that threaten universal rights. For example, we could not agree on language on intimate partner violence, because these organizations understand “partner” as signifying “homosexual”.

What were the advances made?

From my point of view, I think we advanced beyond what we had hoped for. I know that parts of civil society felt there were still issues we should have fought harder on, but I think we got what was to be realistically achievable at this point. That being said, civil society did a really great job. They were coordinated and well organized, and gave very good contributions to the discussions as well as to the final text. An example of this is how the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) assisted in drafting a separate paragraph on natural disasters. We also got very good input on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Norway was given the task of coming up with a compromise on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Despite resistance from religious and conservative powers, emergency contraception was included in the final text, which is quite a big win for us. The inclusion of the right to decide on matters related to one’s sexuality was also an important step forward. Another important advance was made on safe abortion where such services are permitted by national law. One lesson we took away from this was that issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights might be better treated separately from sexual orientation and gender identity. If treated together they can weaken each other’s case. We made some advances on sexual and reproductive health and rights, but sexual orientation and gender identity proved to be very difficult.

You say you advanced beyond what you had hoped for. What factors made that possible?

Yes, and by this I mean beyond what we realistically hoped for. One important factor was that we had a strong zero-draft. Before it is approved by the Bureau, it is UN Women who formulates a draft text that forms the basis for the negotiations, and this served as a very good starting point. UN Women also did a good job in preparing for the CSW.

We also see that the group of like-minded states is growing. Only last fall it sometimes felt like “the West against the rest”. At the CSW, more states participated and played progressive roles, such as Turkey, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, South Africa and Kenya, to mention some.

Another factor that I already mentioned was how I got an impression that there was a strong will to reach an agreement among member states. States that may not have been very constructive earlier certainly played positive roles, especially towards the end of the negotiations. Perhaps the extremity of some very vocal voices may have toned down others. For instance, on 14 March, the Muslim Brotherhood published a statement “Denouncing UN Women Declaration for Violating Sharia Principles.” Mohammed Mursi, the President of Egypt, publicly stated that this was not the attitude of the Egyptian Government. I believe this may in fact have worked in our favor.
How does this year’s outcome reflect the contents of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions?

UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions were less controversial; there were other issues that were more sensitive. Very few made reservations on this point, although a few states remain very preoccupied with these resolutions as only applicable to situations of armed conflict. It also seems that conflict-related sexual violence is less controversial for religious and conservative powers than other forms of sexual violence, for instance intimate partner violence.

In the preamble we managed to include all the resolutions on Women, Peace and Security as well as on Children in Armed Conflict (UNSC Resolutions 1882 and 1998). We were also able to include references to International Humanitarian Law and the Geneva Conventions, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Why was it so important to reach agreed conclusions?

When the Commission took up the theme of women’s human rights and ending violence against women ten years ago, member states were not able to reach agreement. This was also the case last year, when the focus was on rural women. As Michelle Bachelet said: “It is now up to this Commission to put its unanimous support behind an agreement that will strengthen international norms and standards.” This is the only global arena where we can set the standard for women’s rights. Had we not been able to reach conclusions for a second year in a row that would seriously have weakened the legitimacy of the CSW as an international standard-setting body. It is also extremely important for civil society, which in many countries uses what comes out of the CSW to push for accountability from their governments at the national level.


First Woman Appointed as UN Special Envoy

On 18 March, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed former president of Ireland, Mary Robinson, as UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa. “The first-ever appointment of a woman as UN Special Envoy marks an historic first for the United Nations and a major milestone in the progress of women’s rights and gender equality,” stated Michelle Bachelet, former Head of UN Women, in a press statement.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which was adopted in October 2000, calls for increased representation of women at every decision making level for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. From the time of the adoption of this resolution, it has taken the UN close to 13 years to have the first woman appointed as Special Envoy. “The appointment of Mary Robinson as the UN’s first female Special Envoy is most welcome – and much overdue”, says Torunn L. Tryggestad, leader of the PRIO Gender, Conflict and Peacebuilding Project.

Mary Robinson served as president of Ireland from 1990 to 1997 and as High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997 to 2002. She is also a member of “The Elders”, and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, which advocates for victims of climate change. With more than four decades of political and diplomatic experience, her candidacy was supported by all members of the Security Council.

The official announcement stated that “she will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes Region of Africa.” The importance of this work has been underlined by recent events in eastern DRC, where fighting between two factions of the M23 has led to hundreds of people crossing into Rwanda.

Wilton Park Conference on Women in Peacebuilding

On 18-20 March a conference was organized at Wilton Park on ‘Women in Peacebuilding’. The conference brought together nearly 60 experts on the topic, representing various international organizations (including a number of UN entities), member states and civil society...
organizations from around the world. The purpose of the conference was to discuss lessons learned and challenges facing the international community in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), and the UN Secretary-General’s seven-point action plan on women’s participation in peacebuilding (2011). How can implementation of the seven-point action plan be advanced? How can policy be turned into practice?

The topics covered in the various sessions included involvement of women in senior-level mediation and conflict resolution; women’s participation in peace processes; economic self-reliance for women post-conflict; women’s involvement in post-conflict state building; inclusive governance; and the promotion of rule of law and security.

There seemed to be general agreement that the UN system and the member states have not been particularly successful in implementing the seven-point action plan. In terms of the way forward participants called for the UN itself to set a better example, through for instance increasing the number of women in UN-supported peace negotiations and doing more to meet the target of allocating 15% of post-conflict recovery funding to gender equality and women’s empowerment projects.

The conference was organized by Wilton Park in association with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Australian Government/Australian Civil-Military Centre and UN Women. The conference was opened by Gry Larsen, State Secretary of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For more information visit Wilton Park website.

A report summing up discussions will soon be available.

Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

The UN Security Council held an open debate on Women, Peace and Security on 17 April. On the agenda was the Secretary-General’s latest report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), which covers the period from December 2011 to December 2012. The open debate was attended by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who in his remarks stressed that while preventing sexual violence is a primary responsibility of governments, the international community must strengthen its collective efforts to root out its causes and prevent sexual attacks.

Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General’s report. The report reviews 22 conflict areas, including conflict, post-conflict and situations of concern, where Mali is included for the first time.

Key themes of the report include the link between conflict-related sexual violence and illegal exploitation of natural resources; the impact of sexual violence on displacement; and the importance of addressing sexual violence during ceasefire negotiations, wider peace processes and security sector reform efforts. The report also includes detailed information on parties to armed conflict that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for acts of rape or other forms of sexual violence.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide gave a statement on behalf of the Nordic countries, expressing their full support of the report and its recommendations, explicitly stating that they “warmly welcome the Secretary-General’s call for emergency contraception and safe abortion to be included in the responses and services to the survivors.”

Saran Keita Diakite, President of the Women, Peace and Security Network of the ECOWAS region, Mali, spoke on behalf of the New York-based NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, highlighting the vital role civil society plays in combatting sexual violence in conflict.

There was no outcome resulting from the open debate. However, Special Representative Bangura expressed a wish for a new resolution on Women, Peace and Security on a possible mechanism to monitor whether actors treated in the Secretary-General’s report remain accountable to their obligations as outlined in the existing resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Further activity on the issue can be expected in June when the UK, which also has the presidency of the G8 this year and has made efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict a priority, will preside over the Council.
International News

The 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 4-15 March. This year’s topic was the Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls (see separate story).

Lakshmi Puri was appointed Acting Head of UN Women on 26 March following the departure of founding Executive Director of UN Women Michelle Bachelet.

The UN Security Council held an open debate on 17 April on the Secretary-General’s Report on sexual violence in conflict (see separate story).

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, was appointed UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa on 18 March (see separate story).

A Conference on Women’s Leadership in the Sahel was organized on 9 April by the European Union, the Office of the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Sahel and UN Women. The aim was to underline the crucial contributions women from the region are making to economic recovery, political stability and conflict prevention, and to explore ways to enhance their role in these areas. See UN Women press release for further information.

UN Women is opening a Nordic Liaison Office in Copenhagen. The Danish Government has offered to host the new liaison office and the opening was made official by the signing of a host country agreement on 23 April. For more information, see UN Women website.

News from Norway

A breakfast seminar on women’s political participation was organized on 8 March by the United Nations Association of Norway and Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

A seminar on “What kind of peace? Women’s rights and participation in the Afghan transition” was organized on 9 April by the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, CARE Norway, Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS), Norwegian Church Aid, Nansen Fredsenter, and the United Nations Association of Norway.

A panel debate on ‘Women’s land rights’, was organized by the Norwegian Refugee Council on 7 March. Participants included Norwegian Minister for International Development, Heikki Holmås, and PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad.

News from PRIO

The PRIO Gender Team will soon launch a new project together with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) in Finland on Gender and Inclusive Mediation (more on this in the next issue of the GPS Update).

An internal seminar with Orzala Ashraf Nemat, PhD fellow and leading civil society activist from Afghanistan, was organized on 8 March by the Gender Research Group at PRIO in the event of International Women’s Day.

The PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update is now on Facebook! Like our page and follow our updates on relevant topics, publications and events: https://www.facebook.com/pages/PRIO-Gender-Peace-and-Security-Update/161747870650790?ref=hl

Helga Hernes

- Gave a presentation on Women’s Political Participation at The Human Rights Week 2013 at the Faculty of Law, University of Oslo, 4 March.

- Attended a pilot of the “High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes”, organized by the UN Department of Political Affairs, in association with the European External Action Services, Brussels, 16-17 April.

- Published an op.ed. in the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten together with Professor Anne Hellum titled “Diskrimineringsvern er ikke effektivt: Rolls-Royce med folkevognmotor; slik er norsk diskrimineringsvern i et netteskall” (Ineffective Protection Against Discrimination: Norwegian Protection Against Discrimination in a Nutshell), 18 April.


- Gave a presentation on "Likstilling før og nå" (Gender Equality Before and Now) at a book launch at the Institute for Social Research, Oslo, 29 April.

Ragnhild Nordás

- Presented a paper together with Da-ra Kay Cohen at the 48th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) in San Francisco on what kind of militia groups commit sexual violence and what may explain variation, 6 April.
• Participated in an ISA roundtable titled “Systematic Empirics on Gender in the Study of International Interventions” organized by Louise Olsson (Folke Bernadotte Academy), with Joshua S. Goldstein, American University, as Chair. The roundtable was on 3 April.

**Inger Skjelsbæk**

• Presented a paper at the 48th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) in San Francisco on “Understanding sexual violence perpetrators in armed conflict”, 3 April.

• Met with a delegation from the Bosnian organization Suncica on 14 March.

**Torunn L. Tryggestad**

• Participated in a panel debate on ‘Women’s land rights’, together with amongst others the Minister for International Development, Heikki Holmås. The panel debate was organized by the Norwegian Refugee Council, 7 March.

• Attended a conference on ‘Women in Peacebuilding’, organized by Wilton Park, 18-20 March.


• Attended a pilot of the “High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes”, organized by the UN Department of Political Affairs, in association with the European External Action Services, Brussels, 16-17 April.

**Gudrun Østby and Henrik UrDAL**

• Presented a paper at the 48th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) titled “Filling the Other Half of the Sky: Drivers of Gender Inequality in Education and What it Takes to Close the Gap.”

### Recent Publications


### Coming Events

A seminar titled “After the War: What Future for Women?” will take place at Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia on 2 May. The seminar is co-hosted by Universidad de Los Andes and PRIO. This event invites internationally reknown legal scholars and anthropologists to imagine the end of armed conflict in Colombia, and what it will mean for Colombian women.

The next meeting in the Gender, Peace and Security Research Network will be held at PRIO on 29 May.

---

Editors: Torunn L. Tryggestad & Jenny K. Lorentzen

Haussmanns gate 7
PO Box 9229 Grønland
NO-0134 Oslo Norway
Tel +47 22 54 77 00
www.prio.no/gender

The PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update is published by the PRIO Gender Team with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway. If you wish to find out more about PRIO Gender Team’s current research projects, please visit our website www.prio.no/gender. If you have any comments or inquiries regarding the newsletter, please contact the editors: jenlor@prio.no