



**SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP ON WOMEN,
PEACE AND SECURITY**

**Meeting with Women’s Protection Advisers (WPAs) focused on
implementing the mandate to prevent and address
sexual violence in conflict
16 November 2021**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considerations for upcoming decisions of the Security Council

In view of upcoming negotiations on the mandates of United Nations peace operations and Special Political Missions, the Security Council should retain existing references to the deployment of women’s protection advisers and should consider adding the following strengthened language:

Calls for the timely deployment of women’s protection advisers in situations of concern and requests peace operations and special political missions to include a sufficient number of these positions in their regular budgets to reach conflict-affected areas and operate in proximity to communities at risk in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Sexual Violence in Conflict mandate.

Requests that during transition processes from United Nations peace operations to special political missions and/or United Nations Country Teams that the deployment of women’s protection advisers are included among the necessary capabilities and capacities of United Nations presences to support protection of civilians efforts and the consolidation of peace, and are adequately reflected in planning processes, including through specific benchmarks and indicators, to ensure the effective engagement with parties to conflict for time-bound commitments to address sexual violence, and to retain the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence (MARA) as a reliable information base for timely prevention and response.

Other recommendations for the IEG and the Security Council

In addition, Security Council Members should:

- Call for support from the international community, in particular the donor community, to provide earmarked contributions for the deployment of women’s protection advisers in situations of concern, including in United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators’ Offices, to support the work of national authorities, survivor networks, women’s human rights defenders, religious leaders, and service providers to ensure the implementation of a survivor-centered approach in all activities and to promote the establishment of regional monitoring and reporting arrangements, as needed.
- Advocate in the context of the Fifth Committee for the maintenance of existing women’s protection adviser positions and request the inclusion of enhanced capacity in contexts where it remains inadequate or non-existent.
- Activate embassies in relevant countries to reinforce and amplify the efforts of WPAs, including to ensure that CRSV concerns are duly addressed in ceasefire agreements, peace processes, electoral monitoring arrangements, early-warning systems, and transitional justice mechanisms.
- Use periodic visiting missions of the Security Council and Sanctions Committees, as relevant, to engage with WPAs, where they are deployed, and to raise concerns about gaps in compliance with international norms, including Security Council resolutions on CRSV, with UN senior leadership, national authorities, and all parties to the conflict.

- Call upon relevant parties and authorities to ensure that WPAs have unhindered access to conflict-affected areas, detention settings, refugee and IDP camps, and cantonment sites to carry-out their monitoring, reporting and response efforts.
- Give due consideration to convening dedicated meetings of the IEG-WPS on the work of WPAs, for instance on an annual basis, as a platform to hear operational updates from field-based specialists in countries on the Security Council’s agenda.

Since 2008, the United Nations Security Council has developed a robust normative framework through a series of resolutions, which recognize that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war, terror, torture and/or political repression, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security.¹ The Security Council has accordingly requested a number of concrete measures, in both its thematic and country-specific resolutions, to comprehensively address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence, affirming that effective steps to prevent and respond to widespread and/or systematic sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Notably, in resolutions 1888 (OP 12), 1889 (OP 7), 1960 (OP 10), 2106 (OP 7), and 2467 (OP 22), the Security Council called for the timely deployment of Women’s Protection Advisers (WPAs) to strengthen country-level monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements; to enhance efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence against civilians (women, girls, men and boys); to engage with both State and non-State parties to conflict to adopt concrete, time-bound commitments to address conflict-related sexual violence; and to integrate conflict-related sexual violence considerations into mission policies, strategic planning processes, operations, and training, as part of broader gender mainstreaming efforts. The relevant Security Council resolutions called for the number and roles of WPAs to be systematically assessed during the preparation and planning phase of each United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Currently, Women’s Protection Advisers are deployed in six United Nations field operations: namely, in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).² As noted in the latest annual *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* covering the period of 2020: “A total of four peacekeeping missions with mandates that include the protection of civilians have established monitoring arrangements and incorporated the matrix of early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence into their broader protection structures. Two special political missions have also established monitoring arrangements. In 2020, both the authorization of the mandate for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) and the renewal of the mandate for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) required the deployment of women’s protection advisers in the respective missions”.³

Although all components of United Nations field operations have a role to play in addressing CRSV, it has proven critical to deploy dedicated specialists to help missions channel their resources to this historically silenced and invisible crime of war, and to ensure it is accorded priority in the process of restoring security

¹ Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2331 (2016), and 2467 (2019).

² In Myanmar, work related to the prevention and response to CRSV is carried out by a focal point hosted by UNFPA. Moreover, the deployment of a Senior Women’s Protection Advisor in the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) is foreseen for the first quarter of 2022, to enhance support and cooperation with the AU in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

³ S/2021/312.

and building peace. Practical experience has shown that the presence of Women’s Protection Advisers, who are responsible for convening the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on CRSV (MARA), has been instrumental to improving the quality and quantity of information reported to the Security Council. For instance, as noted by the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten: “86 per cent of cases documented in the [2019] report come from settings where WPAs are deployed”.⁴ This is critical given CRSV remains a chronically underreported crime owing to stigma, rejection, reprisals, limited service-coverage, access constraints, institutional collapse, and entrenched cultures of impunity in conflict-affected settings.

Since 2010, the MARA has proven to be an effective tool for the United Nations to strengthen accountability and compliance by parties to conflict with relevant commitments; to coordinate prevention and response strategies on CRSV; and to inform protection of civilians efforts on the basis of timely, reliable, and objective information. The MARA promotes coordination between United Nations justice, corrections, and uniformed personnel to address CRSV, with a view to building the capacity of national counterparts, in line with host State needs, to foster representative, gender-responsive, and accountable security sector and rule of law institutions, which are compliant with applicable international law.

The Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020) notes that Senior Women’s Protection Advisers will be supported by a “CRSV Unit”, in order to ensure comprehensive implementation of the mandate in mission settings. To date, the establishment and adequate staffing of these units remains pending, owing to budgetary constraints. This has resulted in Women’s Protection Advisers often working as “one-person” teams in complex operating environments, limiting their outreach to affected and at-risk communities.

In addition to the deployment of Women’s Protection Advisers to peacekeeping and special political missions, OP 22 of resolution 2467 (2019) requested “the timely deployment of Women’s Protection Advisers to relevant UN peace operations particularly at a senior level, ensuring that they have direct access to senior leadership of such peace operations, and offices of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in all relevant situations of concern”.⁵ The deployment of WPAs to Offices of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams has been challenging to date, due to the lack of specific budgetary lines in a climate of constrained resources. Such expertise is critical, however, to building the capacity of relevant institutional counterparts to address CRSV, such as national justice and security sectors, and to promote compliance by parties with their existing international obligations.

Looking forward, the documented nexus between sexual violence, conflict-driven trafficking in persons, and violent extremism, requires a cross-border response, as well as the establishment of regional monitoring and coordination capabilities, for instance in relation to the Lake Chad Basin, where the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency exacts a heavy toll on women and girls; the Sahel region; and the Horn of Africa.⁶ The deployment of WPAs to United Nations’ regional hubs would enhance the capacity of the UN system to analyse, monitor, and respond to documented patterns of conflict-related sexual violence that transcend national borders, including patterns of violence committed by groups that operate in areas where State authority is weak or absent.

The present meeting of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security will focus on advancing implementation of the mandate to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, building upon the precedent of

⁴ Statement of SRSG-SVC Pramila Patten, Security Council Open Debate on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, “Turning Commitments into Compliance”, 17 July 2020.

⁵ S/RES/2467 (2019).

⁶ This strategy builds upon the precedent of successful regional deployments of Child Protection Advisers (CPAs) to facilitate implementation of the Children and Armed Conflict agenda in cross-border areas where grave violations have been documented.

a dedicated meeting on the role and contribution of WPAs that was convened on 10 November 2016.⁷ It will highlight the experience of five Senior Women’s Protection Advisers (SWPAs) currently deployed in United Nations’ field operations, namely in the complex operating environments of the Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Mali, and South Sudan. This will provide an opportunity to update Security Council experts on operational challenges, as well as identified best practices and lessons learned in monitoring and reporting; engagement with parties to conflict for protection commitments and compliance with international law; coordination of the United Nations system response, including in terms of the fight against impunity; adaptation and innovation strategies to continue mandate delivery in the evolving context of the COVID-19 pandemic; and mainstreaming of sexual violence considerations across mission planning, operations, and training activities. This meeting is timely, as earlier this month, the Office of the SRSG-SVC, DPO, DPPA and OHCHR jointly convened the biennial retreat of SWPAs to exchange good practices and lessons learnt in pursuing survivor-centered approaches to preventing and addressing CRSV. The key findings and strategic recommendations emerging from this retreat will be summarized at the IEG.

The meeting will take place on 16 November 2021 via Zoom from 9:00am to 10:30am (EST). Senior Women’s Protection Advisers will connect to the meeting from their respective duty stations.

⁷ Meeting Summary (S/2016/1107). Available at: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/1107

ANNEX: Roles and responsibilities of WPAs in United Nations field missions and country presences

Women's Protection Advisers fulfil a crucial role in implementing the CRSV mandate of United Nations field presences. They form an integral part of the United Nations architecture on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, which was established by the Security Council through resolution 1888 (2009), and are deployed to field settings to support mandate implementation, including by:

- i. Advising senior mission leadership, including SRSGs/HOMs, Deputy SRSGs, Force Commanders and Heads of United Nations Police (UNPOL) components, section chiefs, Heads of Regional Offices, and military and police focal points, on the implementation of the CRSV mandate and on relevant actions to be taken, regularly reviewing progress on the mainstreaming of these issues;
- ii. Providing overall substantive guidance and coordination across all relevant mission components on CRSV prevention and response measures;
- iii. Chairing the MARA working group at the technical level and supporting senior mission leadership in chairing the CRSV working group at the strategic level;
- iv. Fulfilling reporting obligations pursuant to Security Council mandates, including by reporting on a quarterly basis to HQ; compiling relevant sections of Secretary-General's country reports; and providing UN-verified information on incidents, patterns and trends for the annual Report of the Secretary-General on CRSV, compiled by the Office of the SRSG-SVC;
- v. Engaging in dialogue with parties to conflict on the signing and implementation of commitments to halt and prevent conflict-related sexual violence, in line with Security Council resolutions and in coordination with the Office of the SRSG-SVC and relevant mission components; supporting parties to conflict in the implementation of their commitments to address CRSV and regularly reviewing progress;
- vi. Acting as an entry-point and focal point to other United Nations and non-United Nations actors and coordination mechanisms working on CRSV issues that are relevant to United Nations field missions, fostering complementarity and synergy of action;
- vii. Conducting outreach to grassroots civil society organizations, including women-led organizations, to support their work, including by bridging their perspectives to policy-makers and national institutions, and supporting risk-mitigation strategies to prevent reprisals for their advocacy and action to address CRSV;
- viii. Engaging with humanitarian agencies to ensure appropriate follow-up, referral, and response to cases of CRSV;
- ix. Addressing CRSV in the context of gender-responsive security sector reform, vetting, and training;
- x. Promoting local ownership and prevention strategies on CRSV through advocacy, sensitisation, capacity-building, and training activities at community level, including engagements with religious and traditional leaders to help shift harmful social norms and alleviate stigma; and
- xi. Advocating with host State governments, parties to the conflict, members of the diplomatic and donor community, and regional and international organisations, including through public advocacy, media engagements, and participation in relevant bilateral and multilateral fora.