



## SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERTS GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

### LAKE CHAD BASIN CRISIS

February 27<sup>th</sup> 2017

#### **Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015):**

*OP 5. Recognizes the ongoing need for greater integration of resolution 1325 (2000) in its own work in alignment with resolution 2122 (2013), including the need to address challenges linked to the **provision of specific information and recommendations on the gender dimensions of situations on the Council's agenda**, to inform and help strengthen the Council's decisions, and therefore in addition to elements set out in resolution 2122 (2013), and in accordance with established practice and procedure: (a) Expresses its intention to **convene meetings of relevant Security Council experts as part of an Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security to facilitate a more systematic approach to Women, Peace and Security within its own work and enable greater oversight and coordination of implementation efforts.***

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

##### **Considerations for the Security Council's visit to the Lake Chad Basin**

The Council's mission report must include details of the role of women and the use of gender analysis in the response by national, regional, and international actors to the crisis, and an assessment of measures being taken to respond to the use of sexual violence by Boko Haram to further their strategic and military objectives. Examples of questions that could be raised during meetings in the region:

- *What are the current plans to return IDPs in camps to their communities and what impact will this have on women and girls?*
- *How are both security and humanitarian actors responding to the increasing use of female suicide bombers, and how is it impacting the delivery of humanitarian aid?*
- *What is the current status, conditions, and plans for de-radicalization camps for women that have been removed from Boko Haram camps, particularly with regards to the sufficient availability of female counselors or the access by women's groups and human rights monitors?*
- *Are security actors and first responders sufficiently prepared and trained to address the gender-specific needs of women and girls that have escaped, been rescued, or were members of Boko Haram? What is the percentage and role of women -or the availability of gender expertise- in the MNJTF and among national security actors dealing with the affected communities? Are security actors involved in the fight against Boko Haram being trained on gender and sexual violence and on their responsibilities in the assistance to survivors?*
- *How are counter-insurgency efforts addressing the different ways in which Boko Haram recruits and targets men, women, boys, and girls, as well as the diversity of roles and coercion levels that can be found among women that have been or are still involved in the insurgency? How are they screened and what is the process or criteria for detention or relocation? Do women and girls have access to female specialists during this process?*
- *Have regional actors analyzed the ways in which women and girls, including women's civil society organizations, will be affected by counterterrorism measures?*
- *How are women's organizations and networks and gender-specific indicators, contributing to early warning and prevention systems in the region, and what support do they receive?*

- *How specifically is gender equality or the protection of women's rights being prioritized in reconstruction plans? In the case of Nigeria, how are they being addressed by the Nigerian Victims' Support Fund and the President's Initiative for the North East?*
- *What specific measures are being taken to promote justice and accountability and address stigmatization and reintegration and rehabilitation of survivors? How are national and international actors responding to the protection needs of women and girls beyond Boko Haram's violations (e.g. abuse and exploitation by national security forces, local authorities, camp officials, civilian vigilantes and militias, survival sex and child marriage as coping strategies, and the impact of the massive disappearance of men and boys in communities?).*

#### **Considerations for the Council's deliberations and outcomes on the Lake Chad Basin**

The Council has issued successive presidential statements and press releases to condemn specific terrorist attacks or overall violations of human rights, particularly of women and children. It could additionally include language on:

- The need to empower women's civil society organizations working in peacebuilding and the humanitarian response.
- The need for gender equality to be duly prioritized in national and regional peace and security planning, early warning, and prevention initiatives, including a comprehensive regional analysis on the root causes of the conflict.
- Reiterate the Secretary-General's recommendation that at least 15 percent of funding from the international community to efforts to prevent violent extremism be targeted specifically to initiatives that target women's empowerment.
- Call for the authorities in each country to duly investigate reports of sexual and gender-based violence in IDP camps and host communities, and allegations of abuses by security forces and/or the civilians that assist them.
- Call for the international community to support the humanitarian response, in particular access to sexual and reproductive health (emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis, and safe termination of unwanted pregnancies at a minimum in cases of rape and concern for the mother's life), psychosocial support -including to families and husbands of returning women and girls- and ensuring that women have key roles in food distribution and camp management.
- Call for the governments of the region to adopt, review, or implement National Action Plans on women, peace and security, including efforts to enhance women's contribution to the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism, commit to greater representation of women and greater use of gender analysis in government-funded reconstruction and stabilization programmes, facilitate access to credit and land for women to restart productive activities, especially female-headed households, and develop urgent plans to increase women's recruitment in the security sector and provide systematic training on gender and conflict-related sexual violence.
- Call for supporting the capacity of the UN system in all four countries to work on gender equality and women's protection in the conflict-affected areas, including for documentation and in-depth analysis of the use of sexual violence by Boko Haram.
- Call for cross-border judicial cooperation in identifying and prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence and amplify calls for measures to address stigma, enhance livelihood support and the durable reintegration of survivors into their communities.

The IEG could request a summary note from the Counter-terrorism Committee on the integration of gender in the multiple visits, assessments, and support to the region since 2014.

The Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee could consider listing additional mid-level commanders of Boko Haram, identified as taking a lead role in the kidnapping and trafficking of women and girls.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Introduction

1. The situation of women and girls in the Lake Chad Basin crisis has been a focus of attention by the international community due to two main concerns: the systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism through the abduction and sexual abuse of thousands of women and girls by Boko Haram, particularly since the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in 2014, and the growing use of female suicide bombers by the same group. **Less is known about the gender-specific impact of this complex and overlooked humanitarian crisis in the region, or the role that women's participation and leadership and gender equality considerations have in all efforts to counter violent extremism, build peace, restore state authority and local governance, and ensure the protection of human rights.** And yet the role of gender dynamics in fueling the Boko Haram should provide a strong incentive to ensure that women are substantially included in decision-making at all levels.

### Gender equality in the crisis-affected region

2. Although the root causes of the conflict in the region are commonly associated with climate change -such as the shrinkage of 90 percent of Lake Chad since the 1970s and chronic drought- and governance issues -from corruption to neglect of specific regions and sub-regions in the countries in the Lake Chad Basin, the origins of Boko Haram's campaign can also be traced back to **debates about women's rights in the north of Nigeria over the last years.** The Northern States enacted a stricter version of Sharia in 2003, refused to sign the Child Rights Act which set 18 as the minimum marrying age for men and women, recognized polygamous unions, and further restricted women's freedoms and rights, including access to education and jobs. The escalation of Boko Haram's campaign against women and girls has been associated with the 2012 arrest of more than 100 wives and children of several Boko Haram leaders, including Abubakar Shekau.
3. **The correlation between gender inequality and the conflict can be observed in multiple indicators.** In Nigeria, the North East's fertility rate of 6.3 births per woman compares with 4.3 in the South, and about a third of North East girls begin to have children between fifteen and nineteen years old. There are large age gaps between husbands and wives, and the North also has the lowest school attendance ratio for girls. Of the 56.2 percent of the North East population who own land, 4 percent are women, the lowest rate in the country. The fertility rate in Niger is even higher, at 7.6 births per woman. Maternal mortality rates in the four countries are amongst the highest in the world, with 535 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in Niger; 782 per 100,000 live births in Cameroon; and 860 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in Chad. These levels are even higher in the areas affected by Boko Haram attacks where the level is far above national averages. In Nigeria, the maternal mortality ratio was 814 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015, ranging from 165 deaths per 100,000 live births in the south-west to 1,549 deaths per 100,000 live births in the north-east. Similarly, education-related indicators for girls in the conflict-affected areas are approximately 60 percent of the national average in these countries. **Women's representation in public life and politics is very low across the Lake Chad Basin region.** For example, Niger introduced a ten percent quota for women in elective offices and 25 percent in appointed offices, but has difficulties implementing this low requirement.
4. **The region has long-established regional networks of women peacebuilders,** women-led situation rooms -typically working in elections-related prevention and monitoring-, a recently established ECOWAS West African Network of Young Female Leaders, a Working Group on

Women, Peace and Security in West Africa, and many other regional actors that should be part of conversations about peace and security in the region. In the G5 Sahel countries (Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso), a G5 Sahel Women's Platform has been established in February 2017 to facilitate women's increased engagement on issues of peace, security and resilience in the Sahel. The individual countries of the G5 countries have also established national women's cells, which are tasked with coordinating efforts at the national level. The national women's cells in Niger and Chad can support efforts to expand early warning and prevention-related activities. In northern Nigeria, a number of strategic initiatives have strengthened collaboration with local authorities and established the creation of community-based networks. Local women's groups and women human rights defenders play an active role: negotiating and mediating with armed groups, rescuing women and girls in the occupied territories, providing rescued survivors with assistance and support, speaking on community radio and establishing safe spaces and peace clubs. For example, the Association of Female Lawyers of Chad has opened an office in Baga Sola and Bol to assist gender-based violence survivors and provide psychosocial and legal care, and several women's organizations are providing similar services in all four countries. The well-known Bring Back Our Girls movement has protested every day at 5 pm in Abuja for years.

5. However, **women-led NGOs complain about insufficient support from donors and international NGOs, who do not sufficiently tap into the knowledge of female civil society activists.** This is particularly true for Muslim women's NGOs, many of which combine the promotion of Islam with the engagement of imams to support the rights of women, and combatting child marriage or female genital mutilation. **Common among women's civil society organizations is the demand that the international community do more to empower local organizations to fight for their rights, and tap into their knowledge for early warning and security monitoring.** This must be accompanied by protection measures for women's groups that collaborate with security actors, which may compromise their safety. Additionally, women's organizations are outspoken in attributing the high rates of insecurity to the flow of drugs and small arms in the region.
6. **Little is known about the gender balance of the security actors involved in the response to the crisis including the MNJTF and its civilian component, their specialized training on gender-related issues, or the integration of gender analysis in their planning and assessments.** The mandate of the MNJTF to create a safe and secure environment in Boko Haram affected areas includes prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence. Recently, the government of Nigeria deployed 100 female police officers to displacement sites to make services more accessible to women and girls. Notably, when the Federal Government scaled up the response to the humanitarian emergency, it included the Ministry of Women's Affairs (alongside Health, Interior, Agriculture, and Water Resources) in the inter-ministerial task force coordinating the response and working with humanitarian agencies.
7. **In the Lake Chad Basin region, only Nigeria has adopted a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (launched in 2015), although Cameroon is in the process of developing one and Niger has a draft plan that has already been validated by national stakeholders.** However, Nigeria's plan does not have a budget or concrete indications of how it will be implemented.

**Protection issues and humanitarian concerns affecting women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence**

1. **1.5 million women and girls, or 51 percent of the population in need in the crisis-affected region, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.** This includes approximately half a million that have either survived or are at risk of gender-based violence, from child marriage to physical, sexual and psychological abuse: 144,000 among host communities, 216,000 among refugees, 79,000 among internally displaced women and girls, and 15,000 among returnees.
2. **The use of sexual violence by Boko Haram in furtherance of its core military and strategic objectives have been widely documented and condemned.** The group has abducted thousands of women and girls, subjected them to sexual violence, including sexual slavery, forced marriage, and forced pregnancy. In addition, Boko Haram has continued to subject women and girls to physical and psychological abuse, forced labor and forced participation in military operations, and depriving abductees of food and water, causing some women and girls to starve themselves to feed their babies. A number of women and girls forced to marry Boko Haram fighters were also killed when the group retreated to prevent them from remarrying ‘infidels’ or inform security and regional forces. Boko Haram has been listed in the annex of the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict since 2014 for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, and in the annex of the Secretary-General’s annual report on conflict-related sexual violence since 2015.
3. Analysis of GBVIMS data, and vulnerability screenings conducted by UNHCR, reveals **serious protection concerns related to the risk faced by displaced women and girls of sexual and gender-based violence.** Approximately 90 per cent of those affected by armed conflict in northeast Nigeria do not have access to basic services. As a result, women and girls are forced to exchange sex for food and other essential supplies, exposing them to further risks. Early marriages of young girls to older men are on the rise, as an ostensible protection mechanism and a source of income for desperate families. In the last year, 43 cases of sexual violence were allegedly perpetrated by security guards, army officers, camp officials, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), and vigilantes. In December 2016, nine officers were reportedly arrested and are currently standing trial. Just two per cent of the survivors of gender-based violence that sought medical care were able to access it. Additionally, it is estimated that almost half of all survivors decline to report sexual violence because of a lack of trust in the formal and informal justice systems, a prevailing culture of impunity, fear of stigma, and personal risk. In IDP camps, women and girls often feel uncomfortable reporting to the National Emergency Management Agency representatives, who are generally male.
4. **Many victims have been unwilling to return to communities and families fearing rejection.** Returning women and girls may face greater stigmatization than men and boys and, and face different mental and physical health, safety, and basic needs concerns, especially those that became pregnant or gave birth in captivity. Their children are perceived to be tainted because they have “bad blood”. Abortion is not legal in Nigeria unless it is necessary to save the life of the mother.
5. Human rights groups have expressed **concern that the Nigerian government’s plans to return IDPs in Maiduguri and Yola may be premature,** as the military is still evacuating people, mainly women and children, from villages in the area and relocating them in displacement centers, and some of these communities are still unsafe and mine-ridden. Similarly, concerns have been raised when women and children released from Boko Haram are held for prolonged periods

by security forces for screening and for use as sources for intelligence gathering without due regard to the victimization they have suffered.

6. In Cameroon, the **lack of civil documentation** impairs women's access to services and increases the risk of involuntary return to Nigeria. Sexual exploitation and child marriage are common in the camps. Gender roles put women and girls at a greater risk of cholera and being attacked when fetching water.
7. In Niger, assessments of the displaced and refugee population indicate that approximately ten percent of women had been victims of sexual violence.
8. In Chad, the past months have been marked by an increase in the number of people allegedly surrendering from Boko Haram. More than 1,000 people allegedly surrendered in border areas, of which 70 percent are women and children, progressively arriving in Baga Sola since July 2016. On 24 November, the Chadian authorities transferred 714 children and women to traditional leaders from their areas of origin (canton chiefs). At present, the national authorities have not foreseen any particular support to facilitate their access to basic services nor provided any form of reintegration assistance. The humanitarian community is concerned about potential consequences in terms of protection, from stigmatization to violence.

#### **Gender-specific considerations in efforts to counter violent extremism**

9. **Boko Haram uses a range of strategies to recruit women and girls.** The vast majority of women participating in Boko Haram's operations do not do so willingly. Abductions of women and girls have been a key tactic of Boko Haram since 2013, and **more than 7,000 women and girls have been kidnapped since 2014.** They are abducted to be forcibly married off to combatants, to sow fear in local populations, to use as porters and cooks, to lure the military forces of the governments in the region into certain operations, and for leverage in prisoner exchange and other negotiations. Women and girls have also been converted to Islam by Boko Haram through coercion, by combining the better treatment to those that convert and comply with harsh punishments for infractions and resistance, which include public ceremonies of stoning, flogging, or amputations. In Nigeria, the group and its combatants have offered bride prices and allowances of up to 5,000 naira per month for women to marry them, in contrast to the 400 naira per month that 80 percent of rural Nigerians live on.
10. The need to develop a strategy to engage women in the prevention of countering violent extremism is made more urgent by the complexity of categories that women involved with Boko Haram fall into: from the large number of victims of the conflict and the women and girls who are rescued or escape after being abducted, to women who become radicalized -including through different levels of coercion, as well as voluntarily- and serve as fighters, suicide bombers, informants, caretakers, logisticians, as recruiters for radicalization cells, and even leadership roles.
11. Boko Haram has engaged women and girls in attacks, often suicide attacks, by exploiting gender norms and stereotypes and evade security checks, hide weapons in clothing, and attract less suspicion. Since 2013, the Civilian Joint Task Force in northeast Nigeria has used mass arrests and disappearance of male suspects, and has relied on young teenage men fluent in the local language and culture to operate checkpoints. **Boko Haram have used women in at least 105 suicide attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, and bordering areas of Chad and Niger between June 2014 and April 2016.** In some instances, male militants have disguised themselves as women in veils in order to evade arrest and discovery. After several such attacks (at least 22 female suicide bombers were identified in Cameroon in 2016, for example), both Cameroon and Chad banned the wearing of

full-face veils, which has raised concerns regarding freedom of religion. The ages of the bombers have ranged from just nine years-old to middle-aged. Many of the women and girls used in these bombings are likely to have been coerced, but some could be the widows or daughters of killed fighters.

12. There are **very few women in the security sector in the affected communities**. For example, there were reports of only 112 women among the Civilian Joint Task Force out of thousands of members, frisking female suspects. It is likely that more women would increase the possibility of more frequent and adequate searches of women in security-controlled checkpoints or spaces, although this would need to be accompanied by specialized training for detection and deactivation.
13. **On October 13<sup>th</sup> 2016, 21 of the Chibok school girls were released, following negotiations facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the government of Switzerland.** 195 girls from that school are still in captivity. Hundreds have been rescued in recent military operations. For example, in October 2016 the Nigerian military rescued 338 people from two Boko Haram camps, and all but eight were women or children. In September, another 241 were freed. In late November, Cameroon announced that the MNJTF had freed 900 hostages and killed 100 Boko Haram fighters. Advocacy groups have noted disparities in the treatment between the Chibok girls and other women and girls also abducted by Boko Haram: while the Chibok girls were flown to Nigeria's capital to be treated by a team of doctors and trauma counselors waited, and 23 of them are studying in American University in Yola, other abductees were placed in military detention camps and interrogated before being sent into displacement camps. The authorities reportedly screen them and provide medical treatment at undisclosed locations, nominally to safeguard them from possible reprisals by Boko Haram.
14. **Family members of young men suspected of being Boko Haram members are often unable to locate their relatives in detention**, and the UN has reported grave violations of human rights by the security forces and the vigilante groups that support them, including extrajudicial and summary executions, torture, and sexual violence in detention. In Nigeria, security forces have detained numerous wives of Boko Haram militants and leaders in order to have leverage over their husbands.
15. **Government-led de-radicalization programme** in Nigeria, which as of June, 2015, had 307 women and children enrolled in the programme, have reportedly an insufficient number of female counselors and significant issues with informed consent of those receiving treatment.
16. Motorcycle bans as part of counter-insurgency efforts have limited the movement of teachers and students and interrupted girls' access to education, thus risking greater exposure to child marriage, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence. Women, who represent the majority of cross-border traders, see the source of their livelihood threatened by the increased military activity in the border areas, which are very porous to arms, drugs, and people. At the same time, women working in this sector represent a key constituency for knowledge and information about movement across the borders. It is therefore important to promote and facilitate dialogues between security actors and women working in cross-border trade.