



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

**Annual Meeting with Women’s Protection Advisers (WPAs) focused on
implementing the Security Council mandate to prevent and address
conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)
16 November 2022**

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 consider adding the following strengthened language:

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

Requests that during processes of transition 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 of United Nations country presences, and are adequately reflected in planning processes, including through specific benchmarks and indicators on addressing sexual violence as part of civilian protection and the consolidation of peace; to ensure the effective engagement with parties to conflict for time-bound commitments to address sexual violence; and to sustain the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence (MARA) as a reliable information base for timely prevention, risk mitigation, protection, and response measures.

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 the Offices of United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, to support the work of national authorities, survivors’ networks, women’s human rights defenders, religious leaders, and service providers to advance implementation of Joint Communiqués/Frameworks of Cooperation on CRSV, ensuring the integration of a survivor-centered approach in all activities, and to promote the establishment of national and regional monitoring and reporting arrangements.
- Advocate in the context of the Fifth Committee for the maintenance of existing women’s protection adviser positions and units, and request the inclusion of enhanced capacity in contexts where it remains inadequate or non-existent, giving due consideration to the retention of these capacities in the context of mission drawdown and transition.
- Activate embassies in relevant countries to amplify and reinforce the efforts of WPAs, including to ensure that CRSV concerns are duly addressed in ceasefire agreements, peace processes, electoral monitoring arrangements, national and regional early-warning systems, counter-terrorism initiatives, and transitional justice mechanisms and processes.

- 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 successive Security Council resolutions on CRSV adopted since 2008, 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 and occupied areas, detention settings, refugee and IDP camps, and cantonment sites to carry-out their monitoring, reporting, and response efforts.
- Continue to convene, on an annual basis, dedicated meetings of the IEG-WPS on the work of WPAs, 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, including when used or commissioned as a tactic of war, terror, torture, and/or political repression, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and 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 or restoration 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 promote compliance with International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law by encouraging the adoption of 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. These 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 seven 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**), the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (**UNITAMS**), 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 January to December 2021: "To date, the Security Council has called for the deployment of women's protection advisers in the mandate authorizations and renewals of nine peace operations. A total of four peacekeeping missions with mandates pertaining to conflict-related sexual violence have established monitoring arrangements and incorporated early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence into their protection frameworks. Four special political missions have also established such arrangements. While the

¹ Security Council 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, including the convening of the MARA, is carried out by a focal point hosted by UNFPA. The deployment of a Senior Women's Protection Advisor to the region to cover the Rohingya crisis and other relevant issues is foreseen, as is the deployment of a regional SWPA to the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) to enhance cooperation with the AU in the fight against CRSV.

timely deployment of women’s protection advisers is a widely endorsed priority, the level of human and budgetary resources is not yet equal to the scale of the challenge”.³ In relation to Libya, WPA capacity has been reflected in mandate renewals of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since 2020,⁴ as well as in the recommendations of the independent strategic review of UNSMIL.⁵ A SWPA is now included in the regular budget of the Mission, and is due to be recruited for deployment to Tripoli, embedded in the Human Rights component. In July 2022, the mandate renewal for the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) authorized dedicated capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence within the human rights unit of the Mission, including the identification of Women’s Protection Advisers, as applicable.⁶

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 hidden, silenced, and invisible crime of war, and to ensure it is accorded priority in the process of restoring security 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, in 2020, 86 per cent of cases documented in the annual report came from settings where WPAs were deployed, and in 2021, such contexts accounted for 76 per cent of all cases documented. This is critical given CRSV remains a chronically underreported crime owing to stigma, rejection, reprisals, limited service-coverage, access constraints, institutional collapse, harmful social norms, 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 based on timely, reliable, and objective information. The MARA promotes coordination between United Nations justice, corrections, and uniformed personnel, with a view to building the capacity of national counterparts, in line with host State needs, to address CRSV by fostering representative, gender-responsive, and accountable security sector and rule of law institutions, in line with applicable standards under 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 mandate implementation in mission settings. To date, the establishment and adequate staffing of these units remains pending, owing to budgetary constraints. This has resulted in WPAs often working as “one-person” teams, in complex operating environments, which limits 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 “offices of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators** in all relevant situations of concern”.⁷ The deployment of WPAs to offices of UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams has proven 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

³ S/2022/272, at para. 6.

⁴ Security Council resolution 2542 (2020) called for “the effective deployment of women and child protection advisers” in operative para. 1 (ix).

⁵ S/2021/716.

⁶ Security Council resolution 2645 (2022), operative para. 2.

⁷ Security Council resolution 2467 (2019).

institutional counterparts to address the occurrence, and prevent the recurrence, of CRSV, including national justice and security sectors, and to promote compliance by parties with international obligations.

Looking forward, the documented nexus between sexual violence, forced displacement, conflict-driven trafficking in persons, and violent extremism, requires a **cross-border response**, including through the establishment of regional monitoring, coordination, and information-sharing arrangements, for instance in relation to the Lake Chad Basin, where the ongoing insurgency of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups exacts a heavy toll on women and girls; the increasingly militarized Sahel region; and the Horn of Africa.⁸ The **deployment of WPAs to United Nations' regional hubs** would enhance the capacity of the UN system to monitor, analyse, and respond to documented patterns of conflict-related sexual violence that transcend national borders, including patterns of sexual 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 and address conflict-related sexual violence, building upon the precedent of a dedicated meeting on the role and contribution of WPAs that was first convened on 10 November 2016 and repeated on 16 November 2021.⁹ The meeting will **highlight the experience of six Senior Women's Protection Advisers (SWPAs) currently deployed in United Nations' field operations, namely in the DRC, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan in pursuing survivor-centered approaches to preventing and addressing CRSV**. 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 pandemic response and recovery efforts; and mainstreaming of sexual violence considerations across mission planning, training, outreach, public information, and operations.

The meeting will take place on Wednesday **16 November 2022 via Zoom from 9:00am to 10:30am (EDT)**. Senior Women's Protection Advisers will connect to the meeting from their respective duty stations.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Meeting Summary (S/2016/1107), available at: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/1107; Meeting Summary (S/2021/1012), available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3951241?ln=en>

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

Women's Protection Advisers 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 applicable 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 any 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 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 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 policy fora.