



Security Council

Distr.: General
25 September 2020

Original: English

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations entered 2020 envisioning to make it a milestone year for progress towards realizing global commitments on gender equality and women and peace and security. In the face of the unprecedented crisis unfolding as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the resolve to fulfil those commitments has not waned – if anything, the sense of urgency has increased.

2. In the policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women,¹ the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) warned that the limited progress that has been made on gender equality was at risk of reversal. Women constitute the bulk of front-line health-care workers, shoulder most of the burden of care and will be the most affected by the economic consequences of the crisis. Women are already suffering from a rising incidence of gender-based violence. Experts rightly fear the diversion of resources from efforts aimed at women's health, including sexual and reproductive health, the long-term impact on the participation of girls in education and employment among women and a backslide towards infringing women's rights, with the pandemic as the pretext. The pandemic will have profound implications for international peace and security, including through the further marginalization of women in political decision-making, in particular where peace agreements are being negotiated or in countries undergoing political transitions. More generally, there is a strong correlation between gender inequality and conflict risk.² In his policy speech on gender equality, in February, the Secretary-General noted that there was a straight line between violence against women, civil oppression and conflict; trillions of dollars were spent every year on peace and security, but we should be asking: whose peace? whose security?

3. In its resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council acknowledged the critical role that women played in COVID-19 response efforts, and called for concrete actions to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the development and implementation of an adequate and sustainable response to the pandemic. In the

¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "The Impact of COVID-19 on Women", policy brief. Available at www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406.

² World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).



past two decades, the Security Council has adopted 10 resolutions on women and peace and security, all of which were centred on the importance of women's human rights and the leadership of women in preventing and responding to crises. Many of the best examples of leadership during the pandemic have come from women, yet women lead only 7 per cent of countries. The results of a survey of 30 countries with COVID-19 task forces and committees showed that on average only 24 per cent of members were women.³ In conflict-affected countries,⁴ the representation of women on COVID-19 task forces is even lower, at 18 per cent.⁵

4. At its core, the women and peace and security agenda is a crisis-prevention agenda. In conflict-affected countries, women's organizations and networks are a lifeline for their communities and at-risk groups. Although the primary responsibility for handling public health emergencies lies with the State, women's groups have demonstrated that they are essential leaders in emergencies and play a key role in maintaining social cohesion and preventing further conflict and instability. They have the community's trust and outreach capacity, which are crucial when managing public health messaging during a pandemic. Unless they are financially supported, such organizations run the risk of halting operations.

5. Over the past year, women have been at the forefront of social movements under which people have filled the streets, demanding their rights, equality, a different social contract and more ambitious climate action. One of the most commented upon features of those social movements, including in countries like Algeria, Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon and the Sudan, was the prominent leadership of women of all ages. Research shows that participation of women on the front line is highly correlated with the chance that a social movement will use non-violent methods and succeed, even in highly repressive contexts.⁶

6. The combination of vibrant social movements, fragile peace agreements and a global pandemic is a wake-up call to build more equal and inclusive societies. The effects of ignoring the lessons learned from decades of women's peace activism and our own commitments to women and peace and security will be long-lasting and intergenerational for women, as well as have an impact on collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. The present report is especially timely, not only because of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), but because of the juncture between losing hard-fought gains on gender equality and peace and recovering better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The report was informed by analysis of progress and trends, based on data and information provided by entities of the United Nations system, Member States, regional organizations and civil society and from globally recognized data sources. Key findings include the following:

³ Care International, "Most countries fail to include women in their COVID-19 response teams and plans", press release, 9 June 2020. Available at www.care-international.org/news/press-releases/most-countries-fail-to-include-women-in-their-covid-19-response-teams-plans.

⁴ In the present report, that includes agenda items of which the Security Council is currently seized and which were considered by the Council at a formal meeting during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019, countries with peacekeeping or special political missions in 2019 and countries that received programmatic funds from the Peacebuilding Fund in 2019.

⁵ UN-Women analysis of data available from 12 situations of which the Security Council is seized.

⁶ Erica Chenoweth and others, "Women's participation and the fate of nonviolent campaigns: a report on the Women in Resistance (WiRe) data set", paper prepared for the One Earth Future Foundation, Broomfield, Colorado, 2019.

(a) Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted on average 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide;⁷

(b) Worldwide, the percentage of peace agreements with gender equality provisions increased, from 14 to 22 per cent between 1995 and 2019;⁸

(c) As at May 2020, 5.4 per cent of United Nations military personnel and 15.1 per cent of police personnel were women, compared with 3 and 10 per cent, respectively, in 2015;⁹

(d) The United Nations has verified 102 women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists as having been killed in 26 conflict-affected countries between 2015 to 2019, which is likely an undercount; those incidents are expected to increase, due to the mobility restrictions and reductions in protective measures put into place to combat the pandemic;¹⁰

(e) The representation of women in national parliaments has increased, from 13.1 per cent in 2000 to 24.9 per cent in 2020; in conflict-affected countries, the representation of women in parliaments remains lower, at 18.9 per cent;¹¹

(f) The share of women in national parliaments in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas is more than twice that of those without them (23 per cent and 10.8 per cent, respectively), and the share of women in local government bodies with quotas is 26 per cent – over three times higher than that for those without quotas;¹²

(g) As at July 2020, 85 Member States (44 per cent of the United Nations membership) had translated the women and peace and security agenda into national action plans – an increase from 53 in 2015 and 19 in 2010 – but only 24 per cent included a budget for the implementation of those plans at the time of adoption; and 55 local action plans on women and peace and security have been adopted, in 16 countries;¹³

(h) In the first five years after resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, only 15 per cent of Security Council resolutions included explicit references to women and peace and security issues; between 2017 and 2019, the proportion had risen to approximately 70 per cent;¹⁴

⁷ Council on Foreign Relations, “Women’s participation in peace processes”, 30 January 2019. Available at www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes.

⁸ Data from University of Edinburgh, PA-X Peace Agreements Database, version 3. Available at www.peaceagreements.org/.

⁹ Data from Department of Peace Operations and Department of Operational Support. Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

¹⁰ Data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

¹¹ Data as at 1 January 2020. Excludes the Niger and Yemen. UN-Women calculations based on reporting under Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1.

¹² Data on the proportion of women in national parliaments and local government obtained from United Nations, Statistics Division of the Secretariat, Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database>. Data on gender quotas obtained from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Global Database of Gender Quotas. Available at www.quotaproject.org.

¹³ UN-Women analysis of national and local action plans on women and peace and security.

¹⁴ Data from reports of the Secretary-General on woman and peace and security for the corresponding years.

(i) Total bilateral allocable aid committed to support gender equality efforts in fragile and conflict-affected countries continued to increase, with \$20.5 billion per year between 2017 and 2018, compared with \$18 billion per year between 2015 and 2016; however, bilateral aid to women's organizations has stagnated, at 0.2 per cent of total bilateral aid;¹⁵

(j) In 2019, global military expenditure reached \$1.9 trillion, following the largest annual increase in a decade,¹⁶ but only 30 per cent of national action plans include disarmament as an area of focus.

II. Women and peace and security agenda in 2020: progress, challenges and emerging issues

8. In the previous report on women and peace and security (S/2019/800), which included an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations relating to women and peace and security relevant to the United Nations system from the three peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015,¹⁷ many implementation gaps were brought into sharp focus. It is high time do better everywhere – from local, informal conflict resolution to formal peace negotiations, in the Security Council chamber and in the rooms where plans and budgets for peacebuilding and recovery are decided – and to ensure the seamless interconnection of those endeavours. What is supported and advocated in one sphere must often be brought into practice in another. For example, the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya (S/2020/63, annex I), endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2510 (2020), encouraged the full, effective, and meaningful participation of women, but the Libyan representatives in the three UNSMIL-facilitated intra-Libyan dialogue tracks on security, political and economic matters are overwhelmingly men.¹⁸

9. In the previous report, six areas that needed accelerated action were highlighted: the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and the implementation of the results; women's economic security and access to resources; protection and support for women human rights defenders and peacebuilders; increasing the number and strengthening the influence of women in peacekeeping missions and national security forces; financing for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda; and making United Nations leaders accountable for delivering on the commitments of the women and peace and security agenda, from meeting targets to improving analysis and messaging.

10. The report contained information on progress across those and other areas of the agenda, with particular attention given to follow up on the concrete commitments and recommendations put forward in the preceding report. Moving forward, more attention must be paid to the intersecting forms of discrimination that many women face based on race, ethnicity, ability, economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity and to the removal of structural barriers to increase the participation of a

¹⁵ Data from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Creditor Reporting System. Available at <http://stats.oecd.org>.

¹⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade – says SIPRI – reaching \$1917 billion in 2019", 27 April 2020. Available at www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/global-military-expenditure-sees-largest-annual-increase-decade-says-sipri-reaching-1917-billion.

¹⁷ The three reviews were: Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, study prepared for UN-Women, 2015; A/70/95-S/2015/446; and A/69/968-S/2015/490.

¹⁸ All of the representatives in the security and economic tracks are men, and only 7 of the 26 participants in the political track are women.

diverse complement of women in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace.

11. The mutually reinforcing United Nations reforms undertaken across the areas of management, peace and security and development lay a solid foundation for a coherent approach to inclusive analysis, planning and programming processes, including gender-responsive approaches. Some progress is already evident in integrated leadership and analysis at Headquarters and on the ground, in contexts such as the transitions in Haiti and the Sudan. More must be done, however, to make sure that women are at the centre of the Organization's development, peace and security, humanitarian and post-pandemic long-term recovery plans. The Secretary-General's gender parity strategy, which is integrated into all the reforms, has had a significant impact on the number of women in peace operations, a key commitment of the women and peace and security agenda.

A. Advancing gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and political transitions

12. Women peacebuilders and feminist movements have long called for an end to discriminatory laws and practices, which deny or limit access for women to justice and to social, political and economic opportunities. In 2019, Sudanese student and activist Alaa Salah, speaking to the Security Council at the annual debate on women and peace and security, said that, if women were not represented at the peace table, and if they did not have a meaningful voice in parliament, their rights would not be guaranteed, discriminatory and restrictive laws would remain unchanged and the cycle of instability and violence would continue (see [S/PV.8649](#)).

13. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women and the realization of women's rights must immediately be put at the core of all approaches to conflict prevention, resolution and recovery efforts, not only by exposing and tackling gender discrimination and bias in planning and decision-making, but also by ensuring that there are solid building blocks for the inclusive participation of women. There is sufficient knowledge and good practices to build on, such as inclusive peace process design approaches, which should be used and encouraged by all mediators. The primary cause of the lack of progress, however, is the absence of political will, in particular from parties to conflicts, to fully realize the global commitments enshrined in the women and peace and security agenda across all stages of peace processes. With increased commitments, reinforced policies and accountability frameworks for Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations, as well as new Member State initiatives, such as the Commitment 2025 initiative led by Finland and Spain, a radical shift could happen and be measured not only in numbers around the table, but also in gender-inclusive and gender-responsive approaches to conflict prevention and resolution and in the design and implementation of peace agreements.

14. On 23 March 2020, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic spreading around the world, the Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire – an immediate cessation of hostilities in all corners of the globe to reinforce diplomatic action, help to create conditions for the delivery of lifesaving aid and bring hope to places that were among the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, he made a dedicated call for an end to all violence everywhere, from war zones to people's homes, in the light of the worrying global surge of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic and the related lockdowns. Member States, parties to conflicts, regional organizations and civil society actors, including many women's organizations, were swift to respond to the calls, either by lending their support or by taking specific measures. The Security Council endorsed the global ceasefire in its

resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), recognizing the risk that fragile peace processes could be derailed in the wake of the pandemic. Support for the inclusion of women is more important now than ever, as is the link between individual and international peace and security, which formed the core of the agenda 20 years ago.

15. By and large, global progress in realizing women's rights to equally and meaningfully participate in decisions concerning the future of their countries across all stages of peace processes remains inadequate. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted on average 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in the major peace processes worldwide that were tracked by the Council on Foreign Relations. Although there has been some progress in increasing the participation of women, about 7 of every 10 peace processes still did not include women mediators or women signatories – the latter an indicator that few women participated in leadership roles as negotiators, guarantors or witnesses.¹⁹ Collecting and making public the data on the participation of women in peace processes in real time could help to put pressure on all actors to ensure the inclusion of women. The participation of women is non-negotiable. More men must step up and do their part to break the cycle of exclusion.

16. In response to the previous report and Security Council resolution [2493 \(2019\)](#), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs began holding context-specific high-level strategy meetings to design and support inclusive peace processes. The first such meeting, held virtually in April 2020 with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, explored actions to enhance gender inclusion in the Yemeni peace process, including the effectiveness and impact of the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group. Sharing the outcomes of those sessions with the Security Council Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, as well as maintaining close engagement with women leaders and peacebuilders, could help to shape priorities, including for displaced women. Efforts are also being made to address gender imbalance on mediation teams. In 2019, teams supporting United Nations-led and jointly led peace processes comprised 30 per cent women on average.

17. In the context of shrinking physical, civic and political spaces, efforts to create new pathways for the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, through virtual consultations and engagement, such as those by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, have been welcome. At the same time, it is important to recognize that consultations, either online or in person, cannot be a substitute for direct participation. Furthermore, digital inclusion initiatives require targeted efforts to address gender gaps and other gaps in access to power, as well as in access to digital technology. It is important that all actors facilitating and supporting peace processes scale up political support for inclusive processes and invest in processes and technology that can reach and meaningfully engage all constituents.

18. Delegations to peace talks in wartime are a reflection of the conflict and societal power structures. When decision-making structures consistently exclude women from visible roles, parties to conflicts are more likely to see them as untested, given that they have not previously participated, and they therefore go unrecognized. Between 2018 and 2019, the number of delegations of parties to conflicts at United Nations-led and jointly led peace processes that included women decreased, but there was some notable progress, such as in the peace negotiations concerning the Central African Republic, held in Khartoum in 2019, at which a woman represented an armed group, directly participated in the peace negotiations and was one of the signatories to the agreement. In August 2020, as the Government of the Sudan and armed groups from Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile signed eight protocols towards a

¹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, "Women's participation in peace processes".

comprehensive peace agreement, several women represented the armed groups and were signatories to four of them. That is an important signal and step forward for the Sudan. In 2019, the chairs of the Geneva International Discussions initiated the implementation of a joint chairs' strategy and action plan on women and peace and security and systematically engaged with women's civil society groups.

19. The underrepresentation of women is also evident in negotiations that are not led by the United Nations. None of the bilateral talks between the United States of America and the Taliban held in Doha included Afghan women, the intra-Afghan dialogue, held in Doha in July 2019 and hosted jointly by Germany and Qatar, brought together Afghan civil society groups, government representatives acting in their personal capacity and representatives of the Taliban. Of the 67 participants, 10 were women. They played a critical role in the talks and helped to foster a productive environment for dialogue. In the opening ceremony of the intra-Afghan negotiations between Afghanistan and the Taliban held in September, three of the four women members of the Afghan negotiation team participated, whereas the Taliban delegation consisted exclusively of men.

20. A multitrack approach that increases the number of women, integrates a gender equality perspective and is grounded in discussions with feminist and women's rights constituencies, including human rights defenders and peacebuilders, is critical. United Nations envoys have worked with partners across the United Nations system and third-party mediation organizations to help to envision and operationalize such approaches. Mediators are expected to promote the direct participation of women, clearly articulate it as a priority, rather than as something that can be addressed only after peace between warring parties has been achieved, and explore all possible strategies, including providing incentives and implementing temporary special measures. In 2019, advisory boards provided important advisory and consultative spaces for women's voices, including in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, but they are not a substitute for the direct participation of women. Regular consultations with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the continued advocacy by the Office of the Special Envoy helped to ensure that women, including members of the Advisory Board, achieved 28 per cent participation in the constitutional committee for the Syrian Arab Republic, including in its smaller drafting body. The creation of a third bloc of Syrian experts, civil society members and others helped to improve the representation of women and the presence of independent voices; it offers a model for consideration in other processes. However, numerical representation is only the first step. The symbolic, superficial, last-minute or ad hoc representation of women, without the real opportunity to influence the outcome of processes, cannot be considered enough or acceptable, especially in processes supported by the United Nations, especially given that such insufficient representation withholds valuable perspectives and input from those processes.

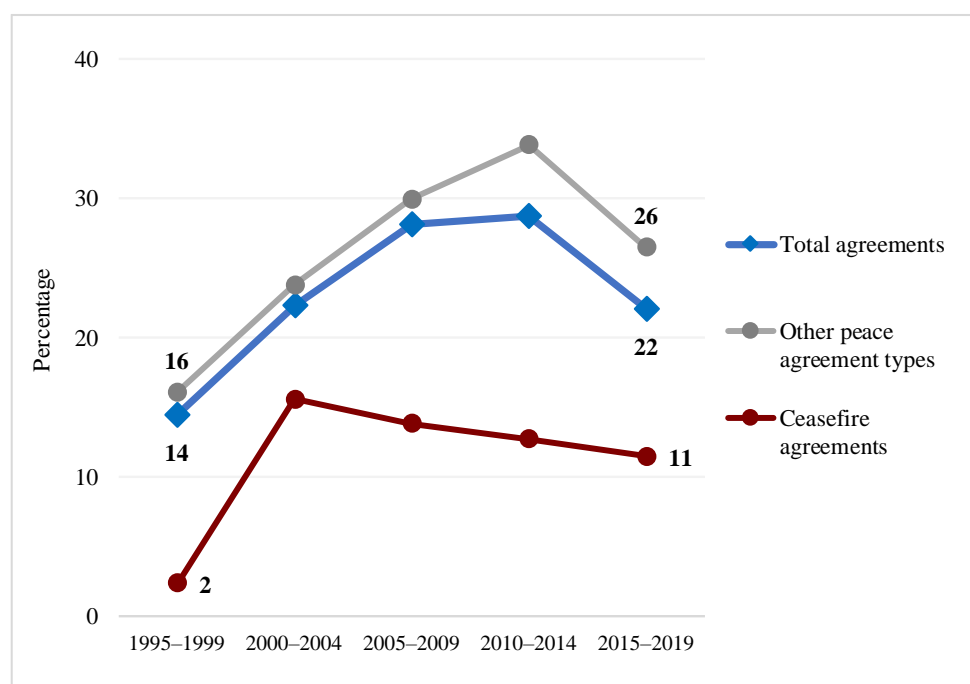
21. Mediators must ensure the participation of representatives of social movements and organizations that advocate for the issues at the heart of the women and peace and security agenda. Historically, the participation of women in formal peace processes has frequently been initiated and attained through concerted pressure by women's organizations in combination with individual leaders. In 2019, the United Nations ensured regular consultations with women's civil society organizations in all four active peace processes that it led or jointly led. In the Central African Republic, that resulted in provisions on gender equality being in the final agreement. In Iraq and Lebanon, the United Nations missions engaged with women members of protest movements and supported reforms aimed at promoting and protecting women's rights. In Haiti and Iraq, the missions advocated for accountability for the killing and abduction of women protesters. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the mission is supporting a network of women mediators to reinforce the participation of women

and their involvement in community dialogues and conflict resolution at the local level.

22. An analysis of trends for the period from 1995 to 2019 reveals that globally the percentage of peace agreements²⁰ with provisions on gender equality has grown over time (from 14 to 22 per cent), while remaining disappointingly low overall (see figure 1). The percentage is much lower for partial agreements, especially ceasefires. Between 2015 and 2019, only 11 per cent of ceasefire agreements included provisions on gender equality, compared with 26 per cent of other peace agreement types. That is compounded by the low representation of women in ceasefire monitoring mechanisms.

Figure 1

Percentage of peace agreements with provisions on gender equality, 1995–2019



Source: PA-X Peace Agreements Database.

Note: Other agreement types include other partial agreements and comprehensive and implementation agreements.

23. While peace negotiations are understandably in the spotlight, the underrepresentation of women is typically replicated in the committees and bodies set up to implement peace agreements once they are signed. In Mali, more than four years after the signing of the peace agreement, women made up 3 per cent of the national commission on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, 6 per cent of the national council for security sector reform, 20 per cent of the truth, justice and reconciliation commission and 4 per cent of the subcommittees of the agreement monitoring committee. In several other committees, there were no women at all. Those paltry numbers were still an improvement over the first year, when there was only one woman among approximately 70 members of the agreement monitoring committee and its four technical subcommittees. In South Sudan, only two committees have met the 35 per cent quota for women set out in the Revitalized

²⁰ Data from PA-X Peace Agreements Database, for which a peace agreement is defined broadly as a formal, publicly available document produced after discussions with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed to by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it.

Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. Although 20 per cent of the committees were chaired by women, women averaged only 18 per cent of the membership of those national bodies; that was after the numbers had improved over the course of 2019, thanks to the sustained advocacy of women's organizations. In the Central African Republic, the percentage of women in the formal monitoring mechanisms of the peace agreement is 17 per cent at the national level and 23 per cent at the local level. Colombia offers the rare exception, where women are better represented and where the implementation of the provisions on gender equality in the peace agreement are actually being tracked, both by the Government and by civil society groups.

B. Gender-responsive peacekeeping and peace operations

24. Women and peace and security is one of the overarching priorities of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which includes commitments on the full participation of women in peace and political processes, the systematic integration of women and peace and security into all stages of planning, implementation, analysis and reporting and the greater representation of women in peace operations. There has been progress made in each of those areas.

25. Using all the resources and expertise of United Nations peace operations is required to ensure that women are leading and creating political solutions. Partnerships with local feminist leaders and women's rights organizations are crucially important. In northern Mali, for example, the United Nations mission and UN-Women established a Case de la Paix to bring together 76 women's organizations from diverse ethnic groups with common peacebuilding goals. The mission has also worked with the United Nations country team, civil society organizations and the Government to increase the percentage of women in the implementation bodies of the peace agreement. In the Central African Republic, women made up only 10 per cent of active participants and observers in the negotiations of the peace agreement signed in 2019, and even that required significant coordinated mobilization by the African Union, the United Nations and civil society groups, including the African Women Leaders Network and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation. In South Sudan, 28 per cent of participants in the local peace negotiations supported or monitored by the United Nations mission were women. Those peace operations: helped Darfuri women to participate in discussions in Khartoum about the political transition and to establish a platform for women to influence the peace process in Juba; engaged with Misseriya and Ngok Dinka women in intercommunity conflict prevention mechanisms in Abeyi; and facilitated the participation of Malian women in the 2020 elections, which increased their representation in the parliament from 10 to 28 per cent, the additional difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding.

26. To support inclusive political transitions, the Security Council should more consistently issue specific instructions and mandates to integrate a gender perspective into security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. Although women combatants represent a small percentage of demobilized caseloads in peacekeeping missions, the implementation of community violence reduction projects has shown the positive impact of women in mitigating local conflict, preventing recruitment into armed groups, increasing the sustainability of reintegration and building community resilience. In both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, for example, women represent half of the beneficiaries of community violence reduction projects.

27. The implementation of new accountability tools and strategic guidance, from standardized gender-responsive conflict analysis as part of transition planning to the

inclusion of a special objective on women and peace and security in the compacts of senior representatives, has also yielded results. It is made possible by the availability of gender expertise in peace operations, thanks to Member States raising the importance of such expertise in the context of Security Council mandates and budget negotiations. The successor political missions to two of the largest United Nations peacekeeping missions in Haiti and the Sudan integrated gender equality considerations systematically throughout their planning and mandates. Improved reporting has given more visibility to women and peace and security issues and can also lead to more positive and durable results. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the presence of women corrections officers increased to 25 per cent, and the mission reinforced patrols and surveillance in 18 locations with heightened security needs for women, informed by gender-responsive security mapping. In Lebanon, the mission sector commanders and battalion commanders must meet specific performance benchmarks on women and peace and security.

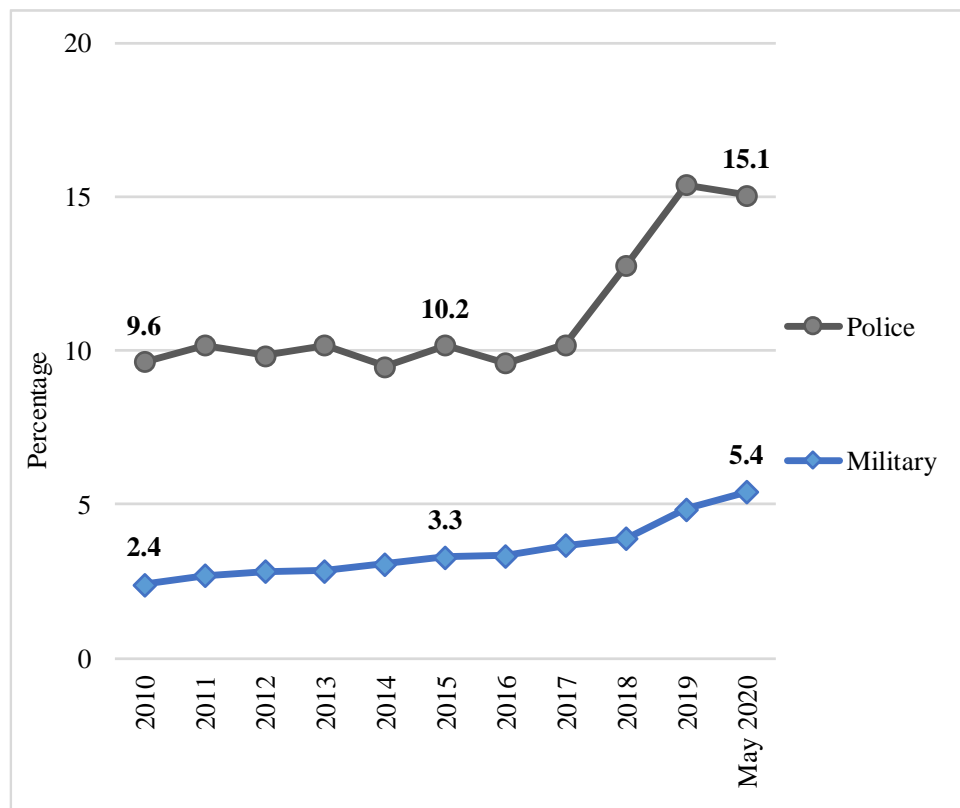
28. The United Nations has over 82,000 uniformed personnel across 22 peace operations. Since the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the representation of women has begun to inch upwards, after several years of stagnation. In peacekeeping operations, as at May 2020, 5.4 per cent of military personnel and 15.1 per cent of police personnel are women, compared with 3.3 and 10.2 per cent, respectively, in 2015 (see figure 2).

29. In October 2019, the Deputy Secretary-General undertook a high-level solidarity mission with representatives of the African Union to the Horn of Africa and met with women peacekeepers, who informed the mission of the range of challenges they faced, including sexual harassment, inadequate or inappropriate facilities and a lack of access to basic hygiene items such as sanitary pads. They also expressed their frustration that, despite their qualifications, many had been assigned mainly to administrative duties. The teams in-country, including across missions and development agencies, in partnership with Member States, are seeking solutions to those challenges.

30. The positive trends seen in traditionally male-dominated peacekeeping support components are welcome. The number of women in technical positions in mine action has increased, from 3 per cent in 2017 to 19 per cent in 2020. The percentage of women corrections officers and justice officers deployed as government-provided personnel increased, from 25 per cent in 2018 to 29 per cent in 2019, exceeding established targets. In adopting resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#) – the first resolution on peacekeeping fully devoted to the representation of women – the Security Council demonstrated the importance of that issue. The Elsie Initiative led by Canada, and all the countries that have joined it or support the Elsie Initiative Fund, is commendable. It is aimed at supporting and incentivizing efforts to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations, in line with the recommendations of the global study conducted in 2015.²¹

²¹ Radhika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict*.

Figure 2
**Proportion of women military and police personnel in United Nations
 peacekeeping missions, 2010–2020**



Source: Department of Peace Operations and Department of Operational Support. Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

31. Although those efforts are on the right track, there is still a long way to go. Dialogue with civil society organizations can sometimes be ad hoc, tied to one-off events and performative, rather than regular, participatory and meaningful. Substantive engagement with women’s civil society organizations and women human rights defenders requires further action in order to become the core operating framework of all United Nations missions, in line with the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights. Beyond the numbers, United Nations reporting will be further enhanced to include political analysis of United Nations mission engagement in that area of work, including any signs of backlash or reprisals, and analysis of the linkages between harmful gender norms and conflict dynamics. It also entails investing in data-driven communications that better convey the important role of women leaders and networks in advancing political solutions and consolidating peace in peacekeeping contexts and the positive impact that United Nations peacekeeping efforts can have on women’s lives. For example, recent research contends that locations where peacekeeping operations are deployed have improved maternal health outcomes, access to vaccinations and school enrolment rates among girls.²²

²² Theodora Ismene Gizelis and Xun Cao, “A security dividend: peacekeeping and maternal health outcomes and access”, *Journal of Peace Research*, July 2019.

C. Protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings and in the context of humanitarian emergencies

32. At the end of 2019, women's rights activist and aid worker Almaas Elman was shot and killed in Mogadishu, a few hours after she had posted on social media about her sister's speech at the United Nations on the importance of reconciliation. Like her parents and two sisters, she was devoting her life to the service of others and the betterment of Somalia. In June 2019, Fatima "Natasha" Khalil, a 24-year-old human rights worker who had also returned to Afghanistan to help others, was killed along with her driver in another explosion in Kabul. She was a former refugee and an outspoken advocate for women's rights who had returned to Kabul to join the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

33. In 26 conflict-affected countries, the United Nations has verified 102 killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists that occurred between 2015 to 2019, which is likely an undercount.²³ In Colombia, the Ombudsman's Office reported 480 threats against women leaders and women human rights defenders in 2019, including misogynistic insults and threats of sexual violence. At least 12 of them were killed, a 50 per cent increase compared with the previous year. In 2020, as soon as the lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic went into effect in Colombia, a women's rights activist was killed outside her home and an assassination attempt was made against an activist for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons. More people were killed in the following days, as women leaders became easy targets when confined in their homes and security personnel were diverted to enforce quarantines. Women's rights organizations are also the most affected by the enactment of laws that shrink civic space. Aside from the scrutiny and restrictions in some countries brought about by counter-terrorism laws, various other restrictions on non-governmental organizations may be used by the authorities to target civil society actors that advocate on behalf of women and girls in their communities.

34. Much more must be done to support women and women's rights organizations and their efforts to stand up for human rights, from immediate condemnation to diligent follow-up. In the vast majority of murders of women's human rights defenders, the victims had been previously threatened and did not receive the necessary protection and support from State authorities from the time that they reported the threats to the time that they were murdered. Available data suggest that many of them worked on sexual and reproductive health and rights, indigenous rights and environmental issues.²⁴ The international community is asked to provide sustained financing to organizations channelling emergency funds to women human rights defenders at risk. The proliferation of national strategies and networks to protect women human rights defenders and the tireless work of national human rights bodies is welcomed.²⁵

35. In his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487), the Secretary-General provided a sombre record of atrocities, documenting 2,838 cases of conflict-

²³ Data from OHCHR, in cooperation with UNESCO and ILO. Organizations such as CIVICUS and Front Line Defenders report higher numbers.

²⁴ Front Line Defenders, "Global Analysis 2019", 11 January 2020. Available at www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2019.

²⁵ Two thirds of conflict-affected countries reviewed for the present report (29 of 45) have national human rights institutions fully or partially in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles); there remained 14 countries with no accredited national human rights institutions. One third of national human rights institutions are led by women, serving as chairpersons of commission-type human rights institutions or as heads of ombudsperson-type institutions.

related sexual violence verified by the United Nations in 2019; in 96 per cent of cases, the violence was targeted at women and girls, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on that subject adopted since 2008. Although that information does not reflect the full scale and prevalence of those crimes, due to the chronic underreporting fuelled by entrenched gender inequality, fear, stigma and lack of access to services and judicial mechanisms, it serves to illustrate its severity. The impact of conflict-related sexual violence may extend through generations, given that, in some countries, children born out of rape are at risk of becoming stateless and may lack access to health care, education and basic services. It was the ninth such report in which the Secretary-General listed parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in countries and situations of which the Security Council is seized. In the past decade, 65 parties have been listed, across eleven countries, and only 1 has ever been delisted, after taking the necessary actions. The Secretary-General called for enhanced monitoring and enforcement of compliance, given that 42 of those parties had not made any commitments to address those grave human rights violations and that sanctions committees had not imposed sanctions on individuals or entities specifically for sexual violence, despite eight of them explicitly including those crimes as designation criteria.²⁶ Recent research confirms that rates of non-partner sexual violence in conflict-affected countries are extraordinarily high compared with non-conflict contexts.²⁷

36. The unconscionable attack on the maternity ward of the Sad Bistar Hospital in Kabul in May, which resulted in the killing of 24 civilians, including 16 women and newborn babies, was a stark reminder of the many ways in which women's and girls' lives are assaulted in conflict-affected countries. In Afghanistan, where there is a high level of underreporting, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented 27 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (S/2020/487, para. 17). It also documented 204 other cases of serious crimes of violence against women, including 96 cases of so-called "honour killings", 45 cases of forced and child marriage and six threats against women human rights defenders. In Yemen, women political leaders and activists have been systematically targeted by the Houthis since 2017, as detailed by the Panel of Experts on Yemen established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2140 (2014), which pointed to a network led by the director of the criminal investigation department in Sana'a (see S/2020/313). While the world was entering into the unprecedented lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Yemeni feminist groups were joining the call for a global ceasefire, the Houthis allegedly attacked the women's section of the central prison in Ta'izz, killing seven women and a child living with his detained mother and injuring 26 other women.

37. Earlier in 2020, the escalation in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic prompted the flight of 1 million people over the course of two months, the largest incident of mass displacement since the war began nine years ago. Some Syrian children are so traumatized that they no longer speak, and the numbers of early deliveries, miscarriages and low-weight births are increasing. In addition to the widely documented cases of gender-based violence, abduction and trafficking, Syrian women suffer from the disappearance or detention of their husbands or male relatives, also because they risk losing their legal rights to housing and land without knowing

²⁶ Twenty-two individuals and four entities in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya and South Sudan have had crimes of sexual violence added to the narrative accounts of the violations in their cases, although their designations were primarily based on other grounds.

²⁷ Maureen Murphy and others, "What works to prevent violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian crisis", synthesis brief prepared for What Works to Prevent Violence, p. 8. Available at www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/355-p868-irc-synthesis-brief-report-lr-26092019/file.

the whereabouts of their husbands or male relatives or without having a death certificate. In conflicts throughout the world, women-headed households are especially at risk. In Ukraine, nearly 70 per cent of households on both sides of the contact line are headed by women, who often have no access to social benefits and limited access to income or protection. In Yemen, women-headed households, especially in situations of displacement, are at higher risk of eviction and report extreme levels of mental and emotional suffering.

38. Intimate partner violence perpetrated against women and girls is more prevalent than non-partner sexual violence, even during times of conflict and humanitarian crises. The results of a cross-sectional survey in three conflict-affected areas in South Sudan revealed that up to a third of women and girls had experienced sexual assault by a non-partner during their lifetime; however, the rates of intimate partner violence were higher, ranging from 54 to 73 per cent.²⁸ There is an alarming rise in intimate partner violence in situations of quarantine, in terms of both frequency and severity. Experts are certain that the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in conflict-affected settings will increase the rates of child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking in persons. Refugee and displaced women and girls are found to be particularly at risk in that regard. In 2018, women and girls accounted for about 65 per cent of the more than 45,000 detected victims globally, and yet, there has been a decline in the prosecution of traffickers.²⁹ It is of concern that the COVID-19 outbreak is increasing the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, due to a surge in negative coping strategies, isolation measures, lack of accountability, the normalization of violence perpetrated by men and boys, limited access to information, services and reporting channels and unequal access to food and health supplies.

39. Women and girls with disabilities account for more than half of all persons with disabilities and nearly one fifth of all women worldwide. Women and girls with disabilities are also disproportionately represented in conflict settings. For example, according to a humanitarian needs assessment conducted in the Syrian Arab Republic in December 2019, 28 per cent of all displaced women in the Syrian Arab Republic were women with disabilities. They are less likely to be prioritized by or have access to humanitarian response efforts and are less likely to be included in peacebuilding. Addressing the rights of women with disabilities is mandated by the Security Council, in its resolution [2475 \(2019\)](#).

40. In its resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#), adopted unanimously at its 7044th meeting, the Security Council noted the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination. In November 2019, in the context of the commemorations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, renewed commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights was shown. However, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a daunting challenge to women's health (see figure 3). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has warned that the pandemic could result in close to an additional 50 million women with an unmet need for contraception, including due to the disruption of supply chains, travel restrictions and the diversion of women's health resources to other services. In addition, in 2019, there were already more than 1,000 security incidents affecting health-care facilities, a significant increase from 795 in 2018.³⁰ In certain conflict-affected or fragile States, the maternal mortality rate is alarmingly high, although it has dropped by 38 per cent worldwide since 2000 (from 342 to 211 maternal deaths

²⁸ Maureen Murphy and others, "What works to prevent violence against women and girls", p. 8.

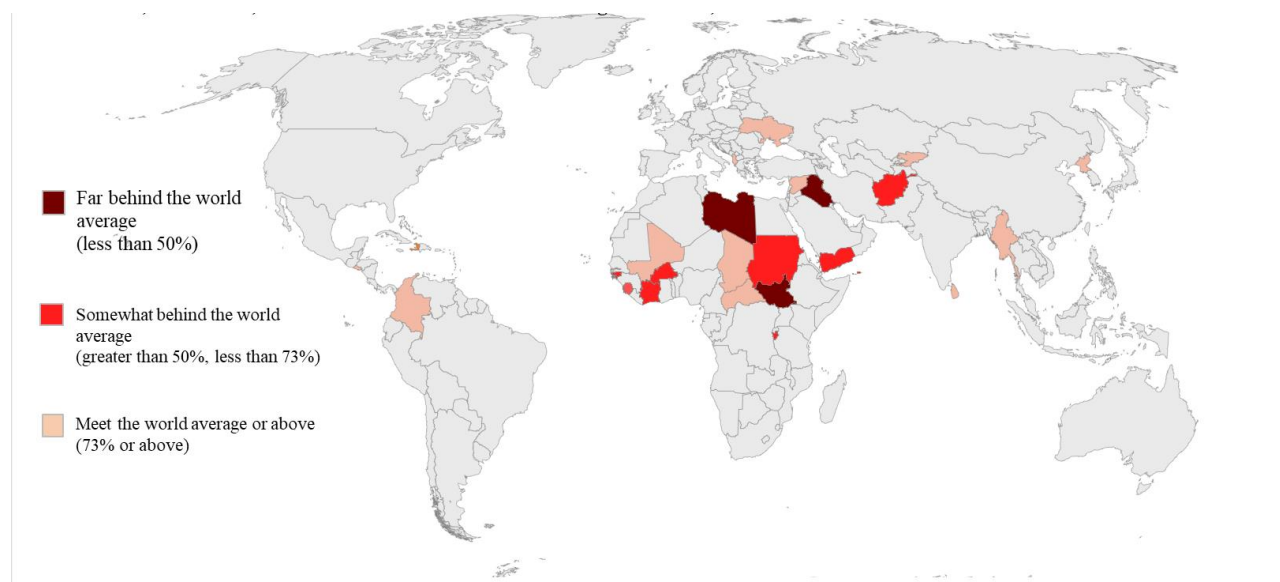
²⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020* (forthcoming).

³⁰ [S/2020/366](#); and World Health Organization Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care. Available at <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx>.

per 100,000 live births). It is of concern that maternal mortality has worsened in Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) in recent years. Most maternal deaths can be prevented by providing high-quality care before, during and after childbirth and ensuring access to comprehensive and non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive health services.

Figure 3

Extent of national laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education, conflict-affected or fragile countries, 2019



Source: United Nations, Statistics Division of the Secretariat, Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database, indicator 5.6.2. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database>.

41. Many stakeholders are increasing their efforts to meet those challenges, reaching millions of women and girls in conflict-affected countries with services that barely existed two decades ago. In the conference on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, held in Oslo in 2019, 21 donors pledged \$363 million for programmes in 2019 and 2020. The joint European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative is targeting 50 million beneficiaries throughout the world, including in many humanitarian emergencies and in conflict-affected countries. Prevention-oriented interventions work, especially when being led by women, targeting social norms and involving the whole community. Attitudes can change relatively quickly when enough resources and expertise are at hand. One such programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo resulted in a reduction in intimate partner violence from 69 to 29 per cent and in non-partner sexual violence from 21 to 4 per cent, in just a few years.³¹

42. United Nations women protection advisers and human rights officers in peace operations play a vital role. The United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo launched an action plan to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the Raia Mutomboki faction, which had been responsible for the highest number of recorded incidents in the previous year. The plan has led to a decrease of almost 72 per cent in reported conflict-related sexual violence in the

³¹ Rachel Jewkes, Erin Stern and Leane Ramsoomar, “Preventing violence against women and girls: community activism approaches to shift harmful gender attitudes, roles and social norms”, evidence review prepared for What Works to Prevent Violence, p. 5. Available at www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/357-social-norms-briefweb-28092019/file.

region since 2018. It has also led to the trial of the faction leader, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery. In South Sudan, the United Nations has been engaging with armed groups for the release of hundreds of women and girls abducted in Western Equatoria State. Many are still being held in military camps. Globally, efforts to free other abducted women and girls, like the many Yazidi women and girls still being held captive, must be redoubled.

43. As at December 2019, 167.6 million people needed humanitarian assistance³² – the highest reported figure in decades. The number of people experiencing acute hunger increased, from 113 million in 2018 to 135 million in 2019, which is a fraction of those that are chronically hungry.³³ Almost 60 per cent of people experiencing acute hunger are living in conflict-affected countries. South Sudan and Yemen and the Sahel are the biggest areas of concern. The global pandemic is expected to bring about a worldwide economic crisis, increased food insecurity, a sharp drop in remittances, a collapse in oil prices and cuts in life-saving foreign aid, all of which will have a profound impact on women and girls, from food insecurity and hunger to disengagement from education and rising incidences of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

44. It is clear that the protection of, and leadership by, crisis-affected women and girls is essential in order to have a sustainable and efficient impact in humanitarian action. Although progress is evident in normative and policy frameworks, it remains to be systematically translated into action in the lives of women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2019, the Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee published the first report on a gender policy accountability framework, in which it established for the first time a centralized accounting of how well the United Nations is delivering on its commitments, standards and roles and responsibilities with regard to gender in the context of humanitarian assistance. The report will be produced on an annual basis, and all humanitarian organizations are encouraged to implement the Standing Committee's recommendations.³⁴ Funding for promoting gender equality in humanitarian action remains low. The results of a joint study conducted by UN-Women and UNFPA covering Bangladesh, Jordan, Nigeria and Somalia revealed that less than 51 per cent of the total funding requested to cover the needs of crisis-affected women and girls was received and that programmes targeted at and/or tailored for women and girls were disproportionately underfunded.³⁵ The Emergency Relief Coordinator has identified gender-based violence as one of the four strategic priorities for funding allocations. Analysis of and expertise in gender equality-related issues will inform United Nations humanitarian efforts, including when responding to the global pandemic and its consequences. Thus far, less than 10 per cent of the funding called for in order to respond to gender-based violence as part of the global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19 has been received.

³² United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global humanitarian overview 2020". Available at www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf.

³³ World Food Programme, "2020 Global report on food crises". Available at https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114546/download/?_ga=2.103660224.1556261707.1598964667-1440025491.1593782226.

³⁴ Inter-Agency Standing Committee and UN-Women, "Gender accountability framework report: 2018". Available at https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_af_gender_report_2018.pdf.

³⁵ UN-Women, "Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming". Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/funding-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-in-humanitarian-programming.

III. Building and sustaining peace: linking the women and peace and security agenda to efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

45. Preventing conflict and sustaining peace depends on addressing the root and structural causes of instability, such as exclusion, injustice, inequality and the spread of arms. The present section contains information on areas that are both vital to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and central to realizing the women and peace and security agenda, such as disarmament, ensuring women's political rights, equitable economic systems and the rule of law, as well as emerging issues, such as violent extremism and the climate crisis, in which the leadership, influence and perspectives of women are sorely needed.

46. The results of the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture conducted in 2020³⁶ revealed that many national and local actors, in particular women, were still not always engaged in a meaningful way in the development and advancement of national peacebuilding priorities. Despite advances made by bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission in integrating gender equality into its programme of work and the Peacebuilding Fund in channelling financial support to gender equality, more must be done to treat women and peace and security as a fundamental part of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts and to address structural barriers to the meaningful participation of women in those processes.

A. Disarmament and arms control

47. Disarmament is core to what was originally envisioned for the women and peace and security agenda. It also features prominently in the section on women and armed conflict of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, under the strategic objective and related commitments to reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments. However, the connections between the disarmament agenda and the women and peace and security agenda are yet to be fully explored. Only 30 per cent of national action plans on women and peace and security include disarmament as an area of focus.

48. Efforts by the Office of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and individual Member States to bring greater attention to women and peace and security commitments in various disarmament forums are welcomed. The national focal points network on women and peace and security bringing disarmament and arms control issues, including the need to address the gender-specific threats and harm posed by the approximately 1 billion small arms in circulation globally, to the centre of the discussion on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda at its meeting held in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2019, is also welcomed. In a recent report on the impact of arms transfers on human rights (A/HRC/44/29), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that ownership and use of arms related closely to specific expressions of masculinity, power and control that furthered gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls.

49. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is collecting global data on the gender dimension of individuals arrested, prosecuted and adjudicated for illicit firearms trafficking offences.³⁷ In April, the Office for Disarmament Affairs

³⁶ See www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/2020-review-un-peacebuilding-architecture.

³⁷ See UNODC and United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, illicit arms flows questionnaire global data collection tool. Available at www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/iafq.html.

launched a multi-year project on advancing gender-mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse. The full implementation of related treaties and instruments remains an urgent priority. Countries advocating for the women and peace and security agenda are expected to lead by example and take a strong stand on issues linked to arms trade and transfers, which include halting global arms exports, a particularly urgently needed measure in conflict-affected countries. Security Council arms embargoes and sanctions must be respected by all, including in contexts such as Libya and South Sudan. Regional initiatives, such as the “Silencing the guns by 2020” campaign of the African Union, are particularly noteworthy.

50. Of deep concern is the renewed threat posed by nuclear weapons, with growing tensions among nuclear powers and an eroding nuclear disarmament regime. In marking the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, there must be a strong recommitment to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, as well as continued efforts by States to promote the inclusion of gender perspectives into the work of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Further research and discussion in multilateral forums of the linkages between other weapons of mass destruction and gender is encouraged, given that those fields trail behind the progress made in the field of nuclear weapons. In that regard, a research report released in 2019 by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research offers ideas for promoting gender-responsive assistance within the context of the monitoring regimes for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

51. New technologies and innovation can offer opportunities for the advancement of gender equality. However, women and peace and security advocates have also raised the alarm about the related risks, such as the potential for autonomous weapons being used to carry out acts of gender-based violence. Machines with the power and discretion to kill beyond human control are politically unacceptable and morally repugnant. The growing investment by some Member States in such weapons technologies is of particular concern.

52. Women remain chronically underrepresented in multilateral forums at which arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament are addressed. In multilateral meetings on disarmament, only one third of the participants are likely to be women, and the proportion of women heads of delegation is even lower.³⁸ To address those imbalances, it was decided in February 2019 that future disarmament groups of governmental experts would aim to achieve the full and equal participation of women in all such bodies, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Agenda for Disarmament. Strengthening the role of women and promoting a diversity of voices in policymaking are crucial steps to achieving the collective goals of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Creating more inclusive, effective and sustainable outcomes also requires looking beyond the numbers and actively incorporating gender perspectives into policies and programmes, which requires sustained investment in gender analysis, expertise and research.

³⁸ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølvi Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, “Still behind the curve”, report prepared for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, 2019.

B. Political participation and representation

53. Men vastly outnumber women in political decision-making worldwide. Men hold over three quarters of the world's legislative power, with women representing only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians.³⁹ In 2000, the percentage was 13.1 per cent. The representation of women is even lower in conflict and post-conflict countries, at 18.9 per cent. At the subnational level, the proportion of women in local government globally is 36 per cent, and it is 21 per cent in conflict-affected countries.⁴⁰ Women under the age of 30 only represent 0.9 per cent of the world's parliamentarians. Young women commonly experience misogyny, and their participation is hindered by discriminatory social norms and laws. A woman holds the position of Head of State or Government in only 23 countries.

54. The COVID-19 pandemic placed the leadership of women in the spotlight. Many analysts have noted how women leaders around the world have demonstrated successful management of the pandemic on the basis of inclusive and evidence-based leadership. Women parliamentarians championed gender-sensitive COVID-19 responses. Drawing on the lessons learned from the Ebola virus disease crisis, the Parliamentary Women's Caucus of Sierra Leone, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has engaged with State institutions, traditional leaders and border authorities on mitigating the pandemic's risks for women and girls and on ensuring gender-sensitive response efforts. More parliaments are urged to further identify ways to promote the leadership and participation of women in COVID-19 response and recovery in the future.

55. Gender quotas, in combination with other temporary special measures, continue to be effective means of reducing the gap in the political representation of women, allowing women to realize their rights to equal representation and for societies to benefit from the increased effectiveness of decision-making derived from greater inclusion. That is why it is one of the areas of focus of the United Nations system in jointly delivering on the call to action on human rights. An encouraging trend is that most conflict and post-conflict countries reviewed in the context of the present report used legislated quotas for national parliaments (64 per cent) and local government (61 per cent). Consistent with previous reporting, the share of women in parliament in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas is more than twice that of those without such quotas (22.9 per cent with quotas compared with 10.8 per cent without) (see figure 4). The representation of women in local government follows a similar trend. The average representation of women in local government in countries with quotas is 26 per cent, compared with 8 per cent in those without.⁴¹ Recent research has shown that including provisions on quotas in peace agreements was a better predictor of the representation of women in post-conflict political contexts and their labour force participation than any other provisions aimed at promoting gender equality.⁴² Recent reforms to introduce temporary special measures that promote gender balance in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger and Ukraine are encouraging. To strengthen progress, Member States are urged to consider adopting and enforcing quotas and other temporary special measures to achieve gender balance at all levels of elected and appointed decision-making posts. Not all temporary special measures are equally effective, however. In Afghanistan, 25 per

³⁹ Data on women in national parliaments as at January 2020 from IPU. Available at <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2020>.

⁴⁰ Data as at 1 January 2020. Excludes the Niger and Yemen. UN-Women calculation based on reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.5.1.

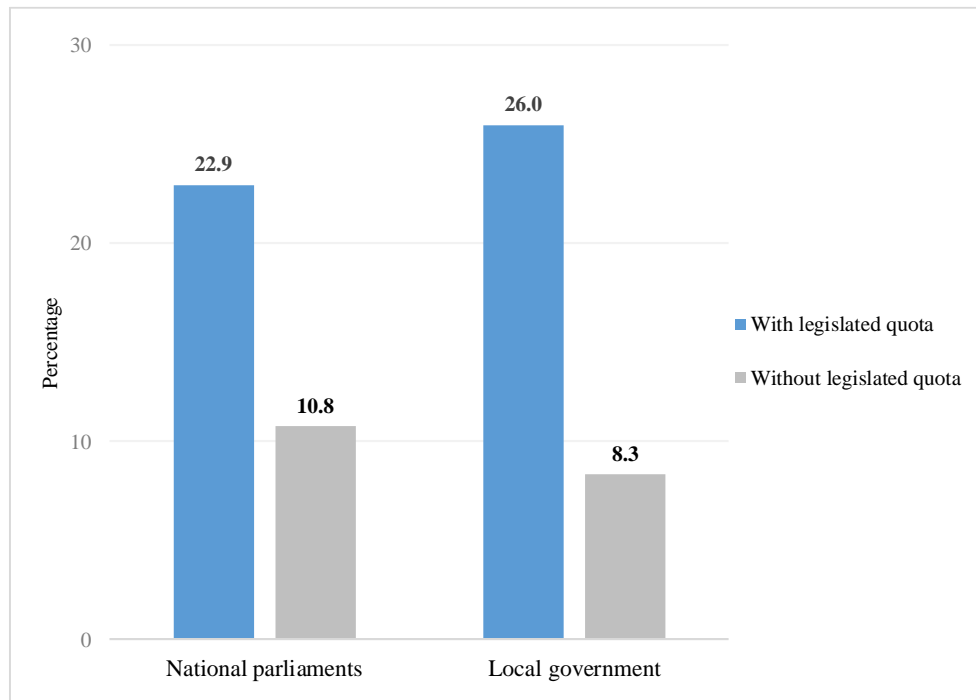
⁴¹ Excludes Yemen. UN-Women calculation.

⁴² See <https://gnwp.org/nyu-research-2020>.

cent of the provincial council seats are reserved for women. However, the leadership of the 34 councils is overwhelmingly held by men, who chair 33 of them.

Figure 4

Proportion of women in national parliaments and local government in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries, 2019



Source: United Nations, Statistics Division of the Secretariat, Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary Union, Global Database of Gender Quotas.

Note: Where data for 2019 were not available, the latest year available was used.

56. The underrepresentation of women remains common in positions in cabinets and other governmental bodies, although there are examples of change. In Lebanon, increasing gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women and girls were two of the most unifying demands of the popular protests. In the new Cabinet, there is an unprecedented number of women ministers (30 per cent), including the Minister of Defence, a first for the Arab region. In Iraq, sustained advocacy by the United Nations helped to increase the number of women in the constitutional review committee from one to five. In the Sudan, 22 per cent of ministerial positions were held by women, including the first ever woman foreign minister, and 18 per cent of the members of the Sovereign Council were women. The first woman Chief Justice in the Sudan was appointed in 2019.

57. Political leadership by women and the inclusion of women are essential components for effective national and local governance and reform, but steep and persistent barriers continue to be put in the way of realizing those components. Violence against women in politics and elections remains a pervasive violation of human rights. Women leaders and public officials face harassment, threats and abuse, both in society and online. For women to participate fully in public life, political institutions must be free of gender-based discrimination and violence. It has been a year since the abduction of Siham Sergiwa, a member of parliament in Libya, from her home in Benghazi, and the public space for Libyan women to voice their opinion

continues to shrink. Member States bear the duty to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women, and to act by institutionalizing an approach of zero tolerance of intimidation, sexual harassment and any other form of gender-based violence, adopting relevant legislation and policies and making the requisite resources available to promote and enable the full and meaningful participation of women in political and public spheres. Addressing those issues remains a top priority for the United Nations system.

C. Economic recovery and access to resources

58. Addressing economic inequality is a crisis prevention strategy, as has been emphasized in previous reports. Women are more likely to spend their incomes on family needs, including health care and education, and thus make a larger contribution to recovery. Yet gender norms and discrimination keep women away from assets and productive resources, including land, property, inheritance, credit, technology and banking. Instead, the international community's support to women is focused on microenterprises and microcredit, while large-scale reconstruction after conflict is dominated by men and overwhelmingly benefits men.

59. While too little continues to be known about the financing of gender-related priorities in reconstruction and peace agreement implementation, studies point to extreme underfunding. Recent research focused on peace agreement implementation in Colombia and the Philippines and reconstruction in Iraq shows that less than 2 per cent of official development assistance is currently targeting gender equality as a principal objective.⁴³ In Colombia and the Philippines, where the participation of women in the peace process was higher than average, while funding for gender equality did increase in the year following the signing of the peace agreement, it decreased significantly thereafter. In the Philippines, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro included a rare provision to earmark 5 per cent of development funds to support recovery among women, their participation in political life and their protection from violence, yet none of the programmes funded by the Mindanao Trust Fund for Reconstruction and Development from 2013 to 2017 reported on allocating funds to projects and activities benefiting women.

60. There are too few examples of good practice in gender-responsive economic reconstruction. In 2013, UNDP began tracking disbursements allocated to women in the context of temporary employment and productive livelihood projects in conflict and post-conflict settings. In 2019, 34 per cent of women benefited from those programmes, an increase from 31 per cent in the previous year.

61. Often, pilot programmes are not replicated at a substantially greater scale, even when proving beneficial. For example, in the Gaza Strip, UN-Women engaged 250 women in cash-for-work programmes; their household incomes increased by 345 per cent. Of those 250 women, 71 per cent reported a decrease in domestic tension and 55 per cent said that their new situation had enabled them to participate in decision-making in their household. In Jordan, the use by the United Nations of an innovative blockchain cash disbursement method enabled it to instantly switch its cash-for-work programme for Syrian refugees in camps to direct cash assistance as soon as lockdowns were in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. When providing livelihood and employment-related support, it is critically important – both for gender

⁴³ Forthcoming study by Jacqui True and Sara Davies (2020).

equality and peace dividends – to promote decent work and to ensure that women workers' rights are respected.⁴⁴

62. The COVID-19 pandemic and worldwide lockdowns exposed the enormous value of unpaid care and domestic work for the economy and how disproportionately that burden is shouldered by women. In several conflict-affected countries, women perform three to seven times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men.⁴⁵ That has a profound impact on paid employment among women, which is expected to be exacerbated by the global economic contraction. For example, even prior to the destruction of the port in Beirut, the economic contraction was estimated to have reduced employment among women in Lebanon by 14 to 19 per cent.⁴⁶ The case for prioritizing care work in decisions about recovery and reconstruction, investing in social protection instruments, including basic income initiatives, and ring-fencing spending on education and health is more urgent and relevant than ever. Alleviating crushing debt through reform of the debt architecture and rectifying austerity policies that affect women disproportionately is also critical to creating fiscal space to shift investment toward social protection and economies of care.

D. Rule of law and access for women to justice

63. In late 2019, a young woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina who works for the rights of the victims of war in her country told the Security Council that justice efforts were slowing down dangerously. She reported that some public spaces, such as streets, memorials and monuments, had been named after convicted war criminals, yet there had been almost no public spaces dedicated to war victims. Moreover, in contrast to war veterans, civilian victims, in particular women survivors of sexual violence, still had to fight for their rights, a quarter of a century after the end of the armed conflict (see [S/PV.8658](#)).

64. That was a stark reminder that the quest for justice lives on through decades, and that victims will fight all efforts to deny or delay their rightful claims and persist in challenging the power, impunity and glorification of perpetrators. In separate historic decisions, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women both requested Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish a comprehensive system of reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.⁴⁷ In Guatemala, which was the first country where a national court issued a conviction for sexual slavery during armed conflict, the United Nations is supporting the victims in receiving the reparations awarded to them in the historic verdict in the Sepur Zarco case. It is also monitoring judicial procedures in another important case of sexual violence committed by paramilitaries against the Mayan Achí almost four decades ago.

65. The testimony of the woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina is also an important reminder to not let up or give in when impunity is rampant in the most devastating conflicts of our time, from Myanmar to the Syrian Arab Republic, and from Afghanistan and South Sudan to Yemen. In his most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2020/487](#)), the Secretary-General noted that not a single case of

⁴⁴ See ILO, *Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation*, 2017 (No. 205).

⁴⁵ United Nations, *Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database*, indicator 5.4.1.

⁴⁶ UN-Women, "Gender-responsive recovery in Lebanon: recommendations for fiscal, social and labour policy reform". Available at https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2020/06/macro%20economic%20policy%20recommendation%20_final%20english%20design.pdf?la=en&vs=5558.

⁴⁷ *A v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* (CAT/C/67/D/854/2017) and *S.H. v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* (CEDAW/C/76/D/116/2017).

conflict-related sexual violence had been brought to trial in Mali. In Nigeria, in spite of the publicity garnered by Boko Haram and its atrocities against women and girls, the first reported conviction in a case of conflict-related sexual violence did not take place until 2019, when a court martial sentenced a soldier for the rape of a 14-year-old displaced girl. No cases of sexual violence committed in the 2010–2011 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire had progressed to trial and none of the survivors had received reparations. In South Sudan, there was still no hybrid court or specialized court on sexual and gender-based violence, and the Government's investigation into the mass rape in Bentiu in 2018 had acknowledged only 16 incidents of rape and had characterized them as isolated acts of criminality. Despite extensive documentation of conflict-related sexual violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, not a single perpetrator had faced in-person prosecution until Germany initiated the first case after nine years of conflict.

66. Nevertheless, survivors and their defenders find other ways to strive for justice. Advocates use different avenues, like the mechanisms created by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to investigate the most serious international crimes committed in Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic, respectively. The Security Council requested the Secretary-General to establish the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) to support domestic efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) accountable for its actions in Iraq. UNITAD has prioritized the investigation of sexual and gender-based violence and has achieved gender parity among its more than 100 staff and leadership team. The extensive use of international commissions of inquiry has also put on the historical record atrocities against women and girls that used to be shrouded in silence, providing a detailed account of facts for when a path for justice finally opens up. In many conflict-affected countries, those documentation efforts have linked conflict-related sexual violence to violations of women's social and economic rights and to broader gender inequality, demonstrating that gender inequality is a driver of instability and conflict and must be addressed as a root cause.

67. A post-conflict environment that is marked by insecurity, violence and a lack of legal and judicial protection is an obstacle to the participation of women in peacebuilding and development. Over the past two decades, considerable progress has been made to strengthen legal, justice and security systems to create safer environments for women and girls and to protect their rights. Recent efforts include stronger legislative and normative frameworks on, inter alia, gender parity and electoral laws, particularly on representation in public bodies, such as in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire. Extending financial support to a network of women lawyers in the Central African Republic has enabled the provision of legal services and access to justice for approximately 13,500 women. Advancing the rule of law in post-conflict countries, including through constitutional and legislative reforms, is instrumental to addressing the intersectional inequalities that women often face and to mitigating the daily socioeconomic injustices that women will continue to experience post-conflict on issues such as family, identity and nationality, property, health care, inheritance and employment.

68. Other developments are encouraging. In Colombia, 55 per cent of the members of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and 45 per cent of the members of the truth commission are women, and over a third of registered victims of sexual violence have received reparations. There are burgeoning efforts to expand access for women to reparations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Iraq and Sri Lanka, including with the support of the Global Survivors Fund. The inclusion of an independent budget line to facilitate the participation of women and girls in the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia could be emulated by other countries. In Mali,

the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has received more than 16,000 testimonies, 60 per cent of which have been from women. Mechanisms such as the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict continue to assist national authorities in conflict-affected countries. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where more than 1,000 individuals have been prosecuted for conflict-related sexual violence since 2013, several emblematic trials are under way. In December 2019, the Central African Republic held a dedicated criminal court session in Bangui for two dozen cases of conflict-related sexual violence, a positive step towards beginning to close the impunity gap. In South Sudan, mobile courts supported by the peacekeeping mission tried 260 cases, many of which related to sexual violence, resulting in 136 convictions by the end of 2019. In July 2020, the International Criminal Court opened its trial against a Malian defendant in what will be the first case in which the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution will be adjudicated by the tribunal.

69. Those steps will not succeed in closing the justice gap unless women are fairly represented in justice processes and historic firsts and good examples become common practice. There have been instances of the COVID-19 pandemic being used to justify the postponement of trials and investigations. Allowing the pursuit of gender justice to slow down is unacceptable.

E. Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism

70. Misogyny and the subjugation of women and girls are a common feature of most extremist and terrorist groups, regardless of their ideology. That is no coincidence. The strategic manipulation of gender norms and stereotypes is part of their narratives and their recruitment tactics. Controlling the lives of women and girls is not just a by-product of what they do; it is foundational to their purpose.

71. In its resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#), the Security Council urged Member States and the United Nations system to ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism and requested the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue throughout the activities within their respective mandates. Since then, the United Nations has made progress across its institutional architecture, its policy frameworks and guidance and its programmatic interventions. The Office of Counter-Terrorism has adopted a gender marker and begun establishing a financial tracking system to comply with the instruction to allocate 15 per cent of funding to projects focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The assessments by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate of Member States' efforts included more than 60 gender-related recommendations in 2019. Efforts led by UN-Women, UNDP, UNODC and the International Organization for Migration have supported the rehabilitation of women formerly associated with extremist groups and the inclusion of women-led organizations in the drafting and monitoring of national action plans to counter violent extremism in countries such as Indonesia, Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and the Sudan, and in community-based initiatives for early warning and prevention. Still, much more is required to ensure the active and meaningful participation of women-led civil society organizations and gender equality activists.

72. Knowledge has also expanded. In 2019, Monash University and UN-Women published noteworthy findings from their research in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Libya

and the Philippines.⁴⁸ In all four countries, quantitative surveys showed that misogyny was far more strongly associated with support for violent extremism than religiosity, age, gender, level of education, employment or location. Research has also shown that women tend to receive less rehabilitation and reintegration support than men and that such support is often not sufficiently tailored to their gender-specific needs.⁴⁹ The rate of return of women suspected of having family ties with ISIL members from Iraq and from the Syrian Arab Republic is significantly slower than that of men and children.

73. Counter-terrorism laws and operations continue to compromise the rights of and peacebuilding advocacy conducted by women's groups, whether intentionally or not. Mechanisms for sustained dialogue with women's organizations are still insufficient and in many countries are non-existent. Women are severely underrepresented in both decision-making bodies and law enforcement agencies devoted to counter-terrorism. Outreach and support to victims requires urgent enhancement. For all the attention and resources that have been devoted to addressing groups that have engaged extensive systems of sexual slavery and sexual violence, including ISIL and Boko Haram, many of their victims have not received justice or adequate support (S/2020/487).

F. Climate change and its peace and security implications

74. In their efforts to prevent and respond to the multitude of contemporary security challenges, countries cannot lose sight of the existential risk of today – climate change. The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are already exacerbating complex crises across the globe.

75. A growing body of evidence points to the critical role of gender norms and power structures in determining the impact on women and men of climate-related security risks. Nevertheless, a more concerted effort is needed to integrate and address the linkages between gender, climate and security in policymaking and to prioritize the participation of women in response and prevention mechanisms. Of the current national action plans on women and peace and security, only 17 contain even a mention of climate change, and gender is largely absent from policy debates on climate change and security.

76. A recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Women, the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UNDP provides compelling evidence of the various ways in which gender norms and power structures determine how women and men of different backgrounds experience and manage climate-related security risks.⁵⁰

77. Women are left at the front lines of both climate change and insecurity, burdened with new economic responsibilities in ever degraded environments. For instance, across the Sahel, where the impacts on livelihoods of rising temperatures and

⁴⁸ Melissa Johnston and Jacqui True, "Misogyny and violent extremism: implications for preventing violent extremism", Monash University and UN-Women, 2019. Available at https://arts.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2003389/Policy-Brief_VE_and_VAW_V7t.pdf.

⁴⁹ Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate "Gender dimensions of the response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: research perspectives", February 2019. Available at www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Feb_2019_CTED_Trends_Report.pdf; and "CTED Analytical Brief: the repatriation of ISIL-associated women", September 2019.

⁵⁰ UNEP, UN-Women, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UNDP, "Gender, climate & security: sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change", 11 June 2020. Available at <https://gender-nr-peace.org/gender-climate-security/>.

unpredictable rainfall are contributing to intercommunal violence, migration patterns are shifting. In many communities, such as those in Northern Kordofan, in the Sudan, men are increasingly leaving villages in search of alternative livelihoods to farming, while herders are leaving women behind as they search for grazing land in increasingly insecure environments. In northern Nigeria, gendered norms and power dynamics underlie the decisions of some young women and young men to join armed opposition groups. Some men are motivated by economic opportunities, seeking to escape failing livelihoods, while some women have joined armed groups to access education and other opportunities for empowerment. In Latin America, the impacts of climate change, conflict and security challenges, and gender inequality converge in a number of contexts, creating compounded risks for food security. In the dry corridor of Central America, climate change and migration have increased women's burdens, including the need to travel greater distances to secure water.

78. Despite those challenges, successful pilot programming by United Nations entities has shown that climate change adaptation and inclusive natural resource governance provide important entry points for strengthening leadership among women in conflict prevention and dispute resolution. The Peacebuilding Fund is investing in scaling up those approaches, including in transboundary contexts. Key partnerships, such as that of UNEP, UN-Women, UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the joint climate security mechanism of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP and UNEP guide policy, investment and programme design to support the leadership of women to build resilient, inclusive and peaceful societies. While emphasizing the centrality of conflict prevention, it is critical to recognize the importance of directing resources, through pooled funds and other means, to local women's groups at the front lines of climate change, and to support the leadership of women in addressing those interlinked crises.

IV. Committing to action for the next decade

A. Planning for action and monitoring results at the national and regional levels

79. At the policy level, national and regional commitments in support of the women and peace and security agenda have continued to grow. Since the first national action plan adopted in 2005 by Denmark, 43 per cent of States Members of the United Nations and observers had adopted a national action plan by June 2020. Of the 85 Member States and territories with a national action plan, more than half have adopted two or more iterations of their plan to address changing contexts and priorities. Some 70 per cent of European Union member States and 45 per cent of African Union member States have adopted national action plans. There is a growing recognition among countries with outward-facing national action plans, such as Canada and Ireland, of the important need to address domestic priorities related to peace and security, including the status of indigenous, refugee, displaced, returnee and minority populations. To address how specific groups of women, within and outside their borders, face different, often structural and intersecting forms of exclusion, discrimination and inequality national action plans would benefit from including concrete actions and priorities related to COVID-19 responses.

80. In January 2020, Mexico became the second country after Sweden to publish a feminist foreign policy, and Canada and France have announced feminist foreign and/or development policies. Increased coordination between gender machineries and those focused on foreign affairs, the security sector and finance, would enable a whole-of-government, comprehensive and streamlined approach to the women and

peace and security agenda. Strengthened partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations are essential, and the commitment by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to give greater prominence to the agenda is welcome.

81. In April 2019, 64 Member States, eight United Nations entities and three regional organizations made more than 400 specific commitments in support of the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda leading up to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). At a midpoint stocktaking exercise in early 2020, more than half of the Member States, almost two thirds of the United Nations entities and a third of the regional organizations that had announced commitments reported on concrete actions taken to fulfil those commitments. In addition, there are currently 10 Member States that have declared themselves Action for Peacekeeping women and peace and security champions. Other Member States are encouraged to join that group and all stakeholders are urged to make good on their commitments and close the remaining implementation gaps.

82. The universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council provides an invaluable forum to promote accountability on women and peace and security. Nevertheless, that important mechanism remains underutilized. A review of the past two universal periodic review cycles for 11 conflict-affected countries showed that out of 3,747 recommendations from countries, only 189 could be considered relevant to the women and peace and security agenda. That said, 713 did address gender equality and the realization of women's rights. A good practice in synergies is the marked increase since 2010 in the number of State party reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that reference and report on women and peace and security implementation. That trend is likely to have been accelerated as a result of the adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.⁵¹

83. Member States are increasingly mobilizing in global coalitions to strengthen the agenda. In May 2020, the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network convened a special session to discuss how to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lebanon, for example, has leveraged its national action plan to issue a decree establishing a special fund and services for survivors, to address increased levels of gender-based violence. More Member States and regional organizations are encouraged to join the Network. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), an innovative compact for women and peace and security and humanitarian action will be launched as part of the Generation Equality Forum.⁵² The compact will bring together Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to drive the fulfilment of existing financial and political commitments and responsibilities in the agenda. It will be equally important to ensure that the six thematic Generation Equality Action Coalitions also integrate peace, security and humanitarian focus analysis into their work.

⁵¹ See Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos and Kelly Yzique-Zea, "Strengthening synergies between CEDAW and women, peace and security resolutions", policy brief (The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2018). Available at <https://gnwp.org/strengthening-synergies-between-cedaw-and-women-peace-and-security-resolutions/>.

⁵² See <https://forum.generationequality.org/>.

B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations

84. The urgent need for leadership, accountability and financial support to accelerate progress on delivering on existing women and peace and security commitments has been highlighted in previous reports. An independent assessment of the implementation of the recommendations in the three 2015 peace and security reviews showed that, despite many efforts and positive developments, a significant amount of work remains to be done. To close implementation gaps further, the reports outlined 10 evidence-driven and time-bound commitments upon which United Nations entities agreed. A year later, it is clear that United Nations entities have made serious efforts to strengthen entity- and gender-specific policies and processes to make progress towards those commitments.

85. Achieving gender parity within the United Nations system and in peacekeeping is a distinct priority in the fulfilment of the full scope of women and peace and security provisions. It is not a substitute for integrating a gender perspective into entities' work. Ahead of target dates, parity has been achieved among senior leadership in the Secretariat. Significant progress has also been made since 2016 in closing the gender gap at senior mission leadership level in both special political missions and peacekeeping operations. While women accounted for 21 per cent of senior mission leadership in 2017, by August 2020, that proportion had risen to 41 per cent. The Secretary-General remains steadfast in his commitment to gender parity across the Organization and is working with Member States to ensure that goal is not only reached but sustained. Overall, the representation of women in senior positions (P-5 level and above) in the United Nations system shows an upward trend, from 29 per cent to 39 per cent between 2007 and 2019. As for resident coordinators, gender parity was sustained globally and, for the first time, was reached also across conflict-affected countries.

86. Efforts to strengthen the gender architecture throughout the Organization continued (see [E/2020/50](#)). Of the current peacekeeping missions, 10 have gender units, 7 of which are located in the office of the head of the mission, as recommended in the 2015 global study. All senior gender advisers and gender affairs officers' posts in the missions were resourced through the regular assessed budget in 2019. In settings such as the Central African Republic and Mali, the missions were additionally supported with extrabudgetary technical staff to assist in the implementation of priority tasking specific to the women and peace and security agenda, as outlined in the mission mandates. Among special political missions, there were 27 gender advisers at the end of 2019, a historic high. Five missions were served by senior gender advisers (P-5 level or above) and nine missions were served by P-4 level gender advisers.⁵³ Seven missions were not served by gender advisers, out of which three had fewer than 10 professional staff.⁵⁴ In special political missions, the majority of gender posts and activities are funded through extrabudgetary resources, which

⁵³ All missions are served by either gender advisers or gender focal points. Some advisers served more than one mission (i.e., the gender advisers for the United Nations Office to the African Union also served the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, and the gender adviser for the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus also served the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus).

⁵⁴ The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon/Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, and the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions. The latter three all have fewer than 10 professional staff.

makes the availability of expertise temporary and dependent on project funding. In addition, seven peacekeeping operations and special political missions had women protection advisers. Few resident coordinators in conflict settings have dedicated gender experts in their offices, which is especially problematic if UN-Women does not have a presence in those countries. In transition settings, such as the Sudan, dedicated capacity is essential to connect and prioritize gender equality and women and peace and security commitments across the work of entities with a presence on the ground.

87. In humanitarian settings, to help alleviate the gap in gender capacity, short-term senior gender and protection advisers (gender standby capacity and protection standby capacity) are deployed. In 2019, those inter-agency senior gender advisers were deployed to 21 countries with humanitarian crises. Such deployments are a stopgap; the need remains for longer term investments in technical gender expertise that can help broker the humanitarian, peace and development divide to effectively deliver on the women and peace and security agenda.

88. The United Nations and its senior managers remain fully committed to strengthening accountability of United Nations system entities towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In his previous report, the Secretary-General committed to updating compacts, terms of references and directives of senior managers to reflect the fulfilment of commitments on the women and peace and security agenda and gender mainstreaming. All senior leaders of peacekeeping operations and special political missions are now, through their compacts, expected to promote and monitor the implementation of women and peace and security resolutions and integrate a gender perspective into all activities. A similar provision is now included in the terms of reference of Special Envoys.

89. The Secretary-General also committed to including gender equality and women and peace and security in United Nations strategic planning instruments and to strengthening accountability by reinforcing monitoring frameworks. A survey among United Nations entities showed that many of them have integrated gender equality considerations in their strategic planning frameworks as a cross-cutting theme, but only a few reported that they have included gender equality or women and peace and security as stand-alone goals. Progress has been made with regard to gender-specific indicators, which are increasingly used to enhance accountability. For example, in 2019, 10 peacekeeping missions reported for the first time on a set of 15 specific women and peace and security indicators. Furthermore, 4 peacekeeping missions integrated mission-specific women and peace and security indicators into their new comprehensive performance accountability system frameworks. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is updating its women and peace and security indicators. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Gender Accreditation Programme translates the commitment of OHCHR to gender equality, diversity and inclusion into concrete actions, and the updated Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines specific responsibilities across senior management and staff. Transforming the United Nations systems to be more gender-responsive requires continuous evaluation. One example is the forthcoming recommendations of the 2020 inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian crises.

90. As a response to the Secretary-General's call for strengthened engagement with civil society and local communities at large, a United Nations-civil society working group developed system-wide community engagement guidelines to support country-specific and local-level community engagement strategies on building and sustaining

peace.⁵⁵ The guidelines include specific recommendations to encourage the meaningful participation of diverse women civil society actors in all aspects of peacebuilding, including the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements and processes and wider access to long-term, flexible funding models. The guidelines also include recommendations on ensuring the safety and protection of civil society actors in restricted environments and promoting and protecting civic space. The United Nations will make use of the guidelines to ensure that all engagement with women civil society organizations is meaningful and effective, including by seeking ways to engage local women peacebuilders in people-centred responses to COVID-19.

C. Financing for the women and peace and security agenda

91. While financing for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda has increased, and notably so over the past five years, inadequate and unpredictable financing remains a major roadblock. Often commitments have not been linked to budgets, planning not informed by a gender analysis and recommendations by women leaders and organizations left unheeded or deprioritized in final decisions. Bigger and bolder steps are needed to translate into reality the feminist vision for peace, grounded in positive peace and human security, that women peacebuilders laid out when crafting the building blocks for the women and peace and security agenda 20 years ago.

92. The impact of COVID-19 in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings may be devastating, exacerbating deprivation, inequality and the feminization of poverty. How the international community upholds its commitments to gender equality will affect countries' abilities to rebuild their economies and societies and to prevent the escalation of violence. The absence and exclusion of women from many of the spaces and processes where major plans, fiscal packages and responses are currently being designed is of concern. A recent report found that in a sample of 30 countries, 25 per cent had not made funding or policy commitments to address gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, or economic assistance to women in their response to COVID-19.⁵⁶

93. Durable and transformative change also requires a re-examination of the global political economy. Existing economic structures and power dynamics are unsustainable, as they continue to deplete natural resources and prevent peace from taking hold. The COVID-19 crisis placed systemic inequalities and skewed spending patterns under a magnifying glass. In particular, there is a stark difference between soaring rates of military spending and the strains witnessed in social protection systems. In 2019, global military expenditure reached \$1.9 trillion, following the largest annual increase in a decade.⁵⁷ At the same time, current social protection systems have failed with inequalities within education systems more evident in efforts to adapt to learning under the pandemic; shelters unable to respond to the upsurge in demand during lockdowns; the supply of medical equipment and masks even in the most affluent countries falling short; and increased restrictions on necessary health care disproportionately impacting women and girls.

⁵⁵ See www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/un_community-engagement_guidelines.august_2020.pdf.

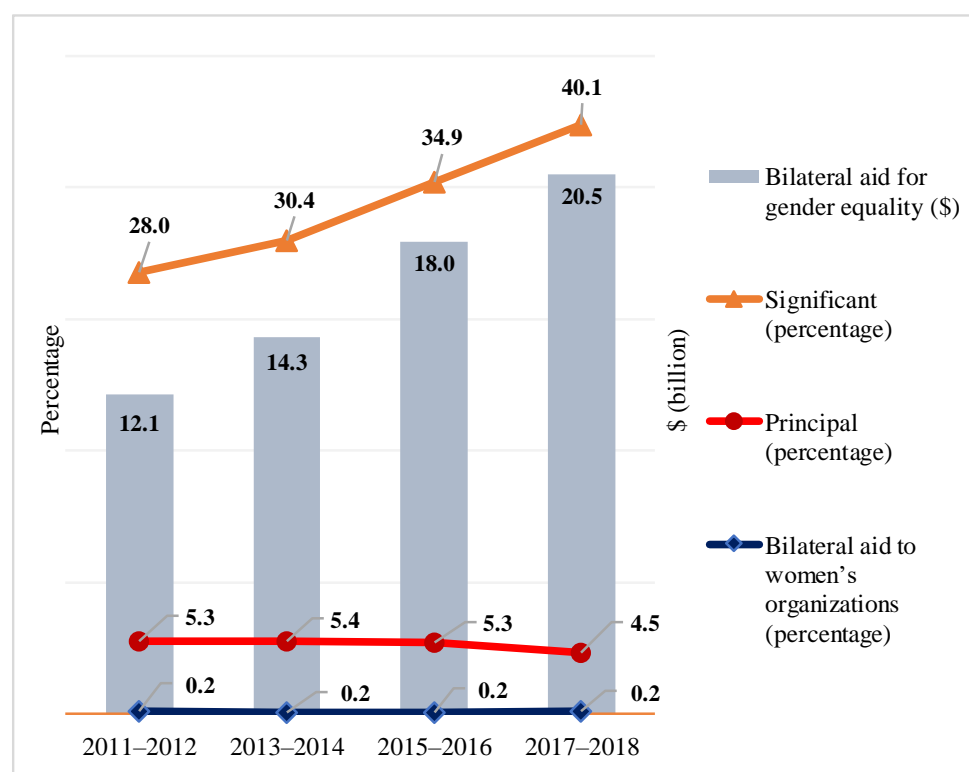
⁵⁶ CARE International, "Where are the women? The conspicuous absence of women in COVID-19 response teams and plans, and why we need them". Available at https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_COVID-19-womens-leadership-report_June-2020.pdf.

⁵⁷ See www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/global-military-expenditure-sees-largest-annual-increase-decade-says-sipri-reaching-1917-billion.

94. Total bilateral aid committed to support gender equality in fragile and conflict-affected countries continued to increase, reaching \$20.5 billion per year by 2017–2018 (see figure 5). Nevertheless, the share of aid dedicated to programmes or projects with the primary objective of improving gender equality and women’s rights has decreased to 4.5 per cent. In addition, bilateral aid to women’s organizations in fragile or conflict-affected countries has stagnated at 0.2 per cent of total bilateral aid (\$96 million on average per year). In a year marking historic milestones for gender equality and peace, concerted action to reverse those trends, to grow and diversify the group of donors supporting gender equality initiatives, and to ensure that women leaders and organizations working for peace in fragile contexts have access to sustainable funding must be a priority.

Figure 5

Bilateral aid targeting gender equality and the empowerment of women in fragile or conflict-affected situations, 2010–2018, average per year



Source: OECD, aid projects targeting gender equality and women’s empowerment, and Creditor Reporting System data. Available at <http://stats.oecd.org>.

Note: Data represent the average per year.

95. Limited financing continued to pose a challenge for the full implementation of national action plans. Few such plans had a dedicated budget or earmarked centralized funding. As at June 2020, only 20 national action plans (24 per cent) included a budget at adoption. In cases where funding for the plan is decentralized throughout government ministries, departments and agencies, there is usually insufficient information to track funding allocations and expenditure and to properly assess the total amount dedicated to overall implementation. Canada, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are among countries that have taken steps towards more comprehensive tracking of national action plan-related spending. Member States are urged to allocate dedicated funding to their national action plan in centralized and sectoral budgets and to annually track expenditure toward implementation of the plan.

96. Financial resource tracking and allocation remain areas for improvement also for the United Nations. In December 2019, the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality concluded that financing for gender equality remained insufficient across the United Nations and suggested the implementation of an automated gender equality marker system at the entity and country team levels. More entities are adopting financing targets and rolling out systems to track gender equality allocations. In 2020, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs institutionalized a revised gender marker to ensure more consistent integration of women and peace and security considerations at all stages of extrabudgetary project formulation and planning. In addition, that Department is committed to devoting at least 17 per cent of the annual multi-year appeal budget to initiatives and programmes that recognize and help advance the crucial role of women in conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Among entities that have had systems in place to track allocations, some positive trends were seen. For instance, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) allocated over half of programmatic funding worldwide to addressing gender equality in some form. Among United Nations country teams, only a few have reached the target to allocate minimum programmatic benchmarks for gender equality and the empowerment of women and improve gender mainstreaming in all areas of expenditure. United Nations entities are expected to ensure that the implementation plan of recommendations emanating from the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality is operationalized into entity-specific action.

97. 2020 also marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UN-Women. Demand for global peace, security and humanitarian programming and coordination support from UN-Women has risen sharply over its first decade as a new United Nations entity. In 2019, total expenditure by UN-Women on peace and security programming and humanitarian interventions rose to \$110.53 million, up from \$89.44 million in 2018, increasing the reach of programming from 55 to 65 countries and territories.

98. The Peacebuilding Fund has demonstrated how the systematic inclusion and participation of women and young people, and gender analysis, are essential to effective peacebuilding. In 2019, the Fund approved investments of \$191 million in 34 countries. Some 40 per cent of all Fund investments supported gender-responsive peacebuilding, within which 14 per cent was dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women as a principal objective, an increase from 12 per cent in 2018. Lessons from the Peacebuilding Fund in promoting gender-responsive programming could be replicated in other pooled funds, including the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. In response to the Secretary-General's 2019 report on women and peace and security, the Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative in 2020 designated two women and peace and security priorities to its thematic focus: (a) the participation of women and their leadership in peace processes, peacebuilding and leadership; and (b) the protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders responding to an identified gap in the women and peace and security agenda.

99. Advances by other multi-donor initiatives are welcome. In Myanmar, the Joint Peace Fund has earmarked 15 per cent of its budget for gender equality and opened a separate window for women and peace and security. In Colombia, the multi-partner trust fund raised its earmarked budget from the original 15 per cent to 30 per cent in 2019.

100. In his previous report on women and peace and security, the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of direct, dedicated and flexible financing for women's civil society groups and called upon Member States to support the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund achieve its \$40 million target by the end of 2020. The target

has not only been surpassed, but thanks to the increased support, the Fund has been able to quadruple the number of grass-roots civil society organizations reached by funding. To date, it has funded more than 200 organizations in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings.

101. The COVID-19 global pandemic has presented grave new threats to the critical work and very existence of local civil society organizations working at the front lines of crises. In a survey conducted by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, 30 per cent of its local civil society partners reported that their organization's existence was at risk due to the pandemic and its effects. Notably, many of the local women's organizations self-identify as particularly well placed to prevent and respond to the pandemic. Yet, their contributions often go unrecognized and unfunded. In response, the Fund launched a new COVID-19 emergency response window to support the projects of women's organizations at the front line of the pandemic and to provide organizations working on women and peace and security issues with institutional funding to help them sustain themselves through the crisis. The call for proposals launched in 25 countries received close to 5,000 proposals from local civil society organizations. In the Secretary-General's report on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, he recommended the expansion and capitalization of the Fund as a means of scaling up support to women's organizations in the context of the pandemic, and urged Member States to follow suit.

102. As called for in 2019, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund launched a new rapid response window on the participation of women in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. The window will contribute directly to increased participation by women in peace processes, including through funding for travel, visa, childcare, and logistical and technical support.

D. Tracking progress and monitoring results

103. The current monitoring and accountability framework, as laid out by the indicators to measure progress on the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) ([S/2010/498](#), annex), has facilitated evidence-based planning and programming across the United Nations system, advancing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Ten years on, it must be updated. In the current peace and security context, the relevance of issues such as the climate crisis, pandemics, misogynist extremism, the growing power of private corporations and the role of new technologies is evident. With the adoption of six additional resolutions by the Security Council since 2010, the monitoring framework has to ensure that there is coherence with policy frameworks that did not exist in 2010, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the sustaining peace resolutions, the youth, peace and security agenda, the agenda for disarmament, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and the outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. It is also important in the context of the revision of the seven-point action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding led by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UN-Women ([A/65/354-S/2010/466](#)). A dedicated task force under the Standing Committee on Women and Peace and Security has been set up to promote alignment and strengthen the existing monitoring framework.

V. Work of the Security Council

104. In the first five years after resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, only 15 per cent of Security Council resolutions included explicit references to women and peace and security issues. Between 2017 and 2019, the proportion had risen to almost 70 per cent.

105. The Council has also changed in other ways. Since December 2016, it has invited more than 50 women from civil society to brief it during formal meetings on country-specific situations. Beyond civil society, the percentage of women addressing the Council in general has steadily grown, including as a result of the appointments of more women to senior leadership positions in the United Nations. In 2019, 38.8 per cent of the 387 speakers who were invited to brief the Council under rule 39 were women, breaking the previous records of 30 per cent in 2018 and 24 per cent in 2017.⁵⁸ United Nations senior leaders provide more detailed information and analysis on situations on the Council's agenda through the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, which has held an average of eight meetings a year since it started convening in 2016.⁵⁹

106. Nonetheless, beyond those positive developments, there have also been some more uneven ones. The negotiations on both of the resolutions on women and peace and security adopted in 2019 were difficult. The members of the Security Council held four Arria-formula meetings on women and peace and security in 2019, a record number. Nevertheless, the percentage of Security Council decisions containing references to women and peace and security issues was lower than in the previous two years.⁶⁰ There was also a record number of briefers from civil society in 2019, but the number plummeted in the first half of 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Council to suspend regular meetings. The advice of those briefers, while often welcomed and praised, was rarely followed by robust action.⁶¹ Regarding sanctions, the Council has asked multiple times that expert groups and monitoring teams have adequate resources and dedicated expertise on gender equality and sexual and gender-based violence; the United Nations will continue to work with Member States to ensure that they do.

107. The Secretary-General's previous report on women and peace and security contained several recommendations for Council members, including to ensure that mission mandates included concrete language requiring the meaningful participation of women in the follow-up mechanisms tasked with implementing and monitoring peace agreements. Several of the resolutions adopted in 2019 did contain good examples of such language. The Council welcomed the commitment to a 35 per cent quota for women in the implementation bodies of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. It also called upon all parties in Mali to meet the 30 per cent quota for women in the mechanisms established

⁵⁸ See "Highlights of Security Council Practice 2019". Available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/highlights-2019. Such highlights are published annually by the Security Council Affairs Division.

⁵⁹ In 2019, the Informal Expert Group was co-chaired by Germany and Peru, in collaboration with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It held two meetings on South Sudan and one meeting on the situations in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Myanmar, the Sudan and Yemen.

⁶⁰ In 2019, 67 per cent of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council included provisions on women and peace and security, a slight decrease from 72 per cent in 2018. The percentage of presidential statements containing references to women and peace and security dropped sharply to 40 per cent, compared to 85 per cent in 2018.

⁶¹ See analysis from the NGO Working Group on Women and Peace and Security at www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/mapping-women-peace-and-security-in-the-un-security-council-2019/ and www.womenpeacesecurity.org/support-civil-society-security-council/.

under the peace agreement, and urged the Malian parties to hold a high-level workshop to identify ways and agreed timelines to make that happen.⁶²

108. Following the recommendation in the previous report that Council Members require enhanced reporting on women and peace and security issues,⁶³ the mandate renewals of peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Mali and South Sudan were good examples of that reporting requirement. Nevertheless, an independent analysis of the NGO Working Group on Women and Peace and Security shows that most reports still lack strong analysis on those matters.⁶⁴ In their statements, many Council members raised relevant women and peace and security issues more systematically. They insisted that 30 per cent be considered a minimum for the representation of women in any meeting held by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and highlighted the importance of safeguarding the 30 per cent quota for women in the forthcoming elections in Somalia.

109. Speaking out regularly in recognition of the legitimacy and value of human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society, and condemning all attacks against them remain indispensable. When those individuals are harassed or threatened for engaging with the United Nations, including the Security Council, the response by Council Members or United Nations agencies has to be crafted in consultation with the defender at risk and the civil society organizations supporting them. Dedicated and independent spaces and avenues for civil society participation must be protected, and Council Members are encouraged to continue working with the NGO Working Group on Women and Peace and Security in that regard.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

110. While the present report is an account of progress and ongoing challenges over the past year, it is also a look back at two decades of implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Twenty years on, our impact is not limited to statements and resolutions. Rather, we see important changes in the ways in which the United Nations works on international peace and security, the resources we invest, and the expertise on which we draw. There have been notable achievements along the way, as the women's movement and its allies in governments and international institutions have changed discriminatory laws, reached milestones in political representation and international jurisprudence, and made a difference in a peace process. Yet progress has been too slow and too narrow, there have been setbacks, and the progress made has been easy to reverse.

111. The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for an international community that has already been challenged by rising nationalism and attacks on multilateralism and global norms. We face an urgent need to build more equal and inclusive societies. Either we lose hard-fought gains on women's rights, the Sustainable Development Goals and international security, or we emerge from the pandemic more equal, resilient and on the road to lasting and inclusive peace. Twenty years after transnational feminist movements successfully pushed for resolution 1325 (2000), it is time to realize their transformative vision and build just and sustainable peace for

⁶² Security Council resolutions 2514 (2020), para. 31, 2480 (2019), paras. 4–5, and 2531 (2020), para. 4.

⁶³ In 2019, 90 per cent (35 out of 39) of Department of Peace Operations reports and 96 per cent (23 out of 24) of Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs reports contained references to women and peace and security and/or information on violations targeting women and girls.

⁶⁴ See www.womenpeacesecurity.org/roadmap-2020/.

all people based on inclusive power structures that underpin our economies, our political systems and peace processes.

112. It is my firm belief that the multilateral system can rise to this challenge. In 2019, as we prepared for this anniversary, I issued directives for the United Nations agencies and departments and recommendations for Member States and the Security Council (S/2019/800, paras. 34–38). They remain as relevant today as they were a year ago. Their implementation will be tracked yearly by my Executive Committee. I also hope for the international community to make more profound changes in the way we conduct our work on international peace and security. As the 2030 Agenda has provided a global blueprint for sustainable peace, security and development, let us join forces behind a vision of inclusive, gender-equal peacebuilding and policymaking.

113. Over the next decade, let us:

(a) **Push for a radical shift in the meaningful participation of women in our peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that women are fully involved as equal partners in peace and from the earliest stages in each and every peace and political process that the United Nations supports.** As laid out in my Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women is a non-negotiable political priority for the United Nations. Already in my report on women and peace and security in 2019, I called for context-specific high-level strategy meetings on designing and supporting inclusive processes, at the start of every mediation process and every subsequent year for ongoing processes. Our efforts will require significant investment in new pathways for the participation of women, including through the use of digital technologies, expanding our partnerships with diverse women's networks, and the strengthening and modernizing of data collection to make public data on the participation of women in peace processes, in real time. I expect that those combined efforts will show tangible results in the next five to ten years;

(b) **Turn the unconditional defence of women's rights into the most visible and identifiable markers of the work of the United Nations on peace and security.** I have asked all senior officials to advance my Call to Action on Human Rights and ensure that public messages and statements, as well as other forms of engagement with all stakeholders, reinforce the importance of realizing the full range of women's human rights and the legitimacy and value of the work of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders. In addition, I have asked peacekeeping and political missions to use their periodic reporting to raise the alert on any signs of backlash or reprisals and improve their monitoring and reporting of threats and violence against activists, including women human rights defenders. I reiterate that I expect more than general references to continued risks; specific data and analysis are needed on who is being targeted for doing what work, and how the Government and international actors responded. Our commitment to women's rights, informed by gender-responsive conflict analysis in each context, has to be integrated throughout our political advocacy, our partnerships and our strategic planning at global, regional and country levels;

(c) **Reverse the upward trajectory in global military spending with a view to encouraging greater investment in the social infrastructure and services that buttress human security.** I have asked Member States to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty, controlling the availability of armaments; to promote the participation of women in all arms control and disarmament processes and forums; and to reduce excessive military expenditures. The current context calls for renewed efforts to curb military spending, which has been a chief strategic objective of the women's movement for peace. I call on women and peace and security and disarmament actors

to join forces to review and bring spending below its current level, including by developing evidence-based analysis, policy recommendations and advocacy that links savings in military spending to investments in economic and social development;

(d) **Galvanize the donor community's support for universal compliance with the target of allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of official development assistance to conflict-affected countries to advancing gender equality, and the remaining 85 per cent to integrating gender considerations, including multiplying by five direct assistance to women's organizations, currently at 0.2 per cent.** This entails not only seeking an increase in allocations, but also earmarking and tracking resources to support women and peace and security, following the good example set by some donors and United Nations entities, such as the Peacebuilding Fund. I expect all relevant United Nations entities and country teams to comply with the recommendations of the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality to set benchmarks to reach the target of allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of programmatic budgets to gender equality and to improve the mainstreaming of gender in all areas of expenditure, as instructed in my 2019 report. Implementation of this directive will be tracked yearly and discussed with my Executive Committee;

(e) **Bring about a gender data revolution on women and peace and security that reaches the general public, focuses on closing data gaps and increases our knowledge of today's most pressing issues, building on my data strategy.** Over the past two decades of implementing this agenda, our annual reports to the Security Council have presented details about international courts and peace tables, percentages of women in politics and the security sector, documented atrocities against women and girls, the intricacies of national action plans, and markers of professionalization and normative development in our international institutions. While our knowledge of those matters has grown steadily, significant gaps remain. It is clear that we have to expand our partnerships on data production and use and invest much more in making the knowledge both useful for both policymakers and the general public, and relevant to the current peace and security context and emerging challenges and trends.

114. More than ever before we must build on the incremental progress made in the women and peace and security agenda, move beyond incremental to wholesale implementation, and make an all-out effort to address the remaining challenges with vigour and steadfast commitment.