



Security Council

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Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. Nearly a quarter of a century after the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1325 (2000), women's full, equal and meaningful participation in building peace should be the norm, not an aspiration or an afterthought, but the data show that this is far from being a reality. In peace processes, negotiating parties continue to regularly exclude women, and impunity for atrocities against women and girls is still prevalent. Women continue to face entrenched barriers to direct participation in peace and political processes, and women's organizations struggle to find resources, while military spending continues to grow every year. This remains the case even though there is ample evidence that women's participation contributes to more robust democracies and longer-lasting peace.¹

2. A growing share of the world's population lives under autocratic rule, after many years of democratic backsliding. Misogyny is a common thread in the rise of authoritarianism and in the spread of conflict and violent extremism. The number of people in need of humanitarian aid increased by 25 per cent over the past year, and the world is undergoing the largest global food crisis in modern history. Much of this increase is driven by nearly 200 armed conflicts and situations of organized violence,² as well as by the climate crisis and the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In this difficult context, the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected countries³ reached 614 million in 2022, 50 per cent higher than the number in 2017.⁴ In early 2022, the number of people forced to flee war, violence and

* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

¹ See the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Available at <https://wps.unwomen.org/>. Similarly, nearly 100 studies indicate a link between sex and gender inequality and violent outcomes (Dara Kay Cohen and Sabrina Karim, "Does More Equality for Women Mean Less War? Rethinking Sex and Gender Inequality and Political Violence", *International Organization*, vol. 76, no. 2 (Spring 2022)).

² See Uppsala Conflict Data Program, data for 2022. Available at <https://ucdp.uu.se/year/2022>.

³ These include: (a) countries featuring in relation to 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 2022 to 31 December 2022; (b) countries with peacekeeping or special political missions in 2022; and (c) countries that received programmatic funds from the Peacebuilding Fund in 2022.

⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the gender snapshot 2023" (New York, 2023), p. 23.



persecution surpassed 100 million, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 117.2 million people will be forcibly displaced or stateless by the end of 2023.

3. As these negative trends turn back the clock on women's rights, they also turn back the clock of history, setting back both gender equality and global peace. When fighting broke out in the Sudan in April 2023, widespread sexual violence terrorized the women and girls of Darfur and elsewhere in the country,⁵ mirroring violence witnessed in Darfur two decades ago. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have issued more than 50 edicts⁶ to suppress women's and girls' rights, in a return to the oppression of the 1990s.

4. The goals of the Secretary-General with respect to women and peace and security for the decade leading up to 2030 provide a different path forward for building and sustaining peace. The international community has many opportunities to help implement this vision: from the proliferation of feminist foreign policies and the collective efforts of the Generation Equality campaign, to the explicit commitments on gender equality laid out in Our Common Agenda (A/75/982) and the policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace (A/77/CRP.1/Add.8), to the preparations for the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2025. If governments and international organizations follow the lead of the global women's rights movement, irrepressible and undeterred by either backlash or setbacks, we can remain hopeful of seeing a radical change in direction.

5. The present report is prepared pursuant to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000); resolution 2122 (2013), in which the Council called for updates on progress across all areas of the women and peace and security agenda, highlighting gaps and challenges; and resolution 2493 (2019), in which the Council called for reinforced measures to fully implement the agenda. It follows up on the Secretary-General's directives to the United Nations and the five goals for the decade articulated in the reports on women and peace and security from 2019 and 2020, especially the goal of achieving a radical shift and tangible results in women's meaningful participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The report is informed by data and analysis provided by entities of the United Nations system, including peace operations and country teams, inputs from Member States, regional organizations and civil society, and analysis from other globally recognized data sources.

II. Goals for the decade on women and peace and security: push for a radical shift in the meaningful participation of women in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts

6. In 2020, the Secretary-General articulated five goals on women, peace and security for the decade ahead. One of them defined women's full, equal and meaningful participation as a non-negotiable political priority for the United Nations and set out to achieve tangible results in the next 10 years.

⁵ See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/07/press-release-sudan-top-un-officials-sound-alarm-at-spoke-in-violence-against-women-and-girls> and <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15381.doc.htm>.

⁶ Between September 2021 and May 2023 (A/HRC/53/21, para. 17).

A. Women's meaningful participation in negotiating peace

7. The right to equal participation is firmly rooted in the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian and human rights law. This right is at the heart of the women and peace and security agenda, which calls for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all efforts to build sustainable peace. Nevertheless, women continue to have limited opportunities to influence negotiations for peace. The political space for women to participate in decision-making on peace and security decreased in several countries over the past year. Meanwhile, there are increasing difficulties and security concerns for the women who do participate, including through the weaponization of digital technologies. Advocating and supporting targeted measures to advance women's direct participation is critical for advancing substantive equality and building inclusive and sustainable peace.

8. Geopolitical divisions and changes in conflict trends have led to setbacks in, or even stalled, peace processes. Entrenched barriers to women's participation have persisted, and women direct participation as mediators, negotiators and signatories remains an exception despite repeated calls for change. In the negotiations between the Government of Colombia and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), women participated as negotiators in both delegations, almost reaching gender parity. In contrast, in 2022, during the negotiations between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, neither party included women in their negotiating team, although one woman served as mediator in the talks that led to the peace agreement in November 2022. Similarly, there were no women in the delegations of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue process facilitated by the European Union during the reporting period, nor in the delegations for the negotiation or subsequent review of the five-point consensus of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on Myanmar. Trend data since 1990 show that seldom are representatives of women's groups found as signatories of agreements. Of 18 peace agreements reached in 2022, only one (according to independent research)⁷ was signed or witnessed by a representative of a women's group or organization.

9. In 2022, women participated as negotiators or delegates on behalf of parties to conflict in 4 of the 5 active peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations.⁸ Proportionally, their level of representation stood only at 16 per cent, however, a further drop compared with 19 per cent in 2021 and 23 per cent in 2020. Without active measures taken by the United Nations, that number would have been even lower. In Yemen, the parties to the conflict continued to reject women's participation, despite consistent advocacy by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, who encouraged at least 30 per cent of women in delegations, as well as additional and non-transferable seats for women. All five of the active peace processes consulted substantively with women's civil society organizations and were provided with gender expertise. Despite good faith efforts, when processes were blocked or stalled, opportunities for inclusion were substantially restricted.

10. Within the context of mounting challenges and pushback on gender equality, the United Nations endeavours to lead by example. In 2022, women were the incumbents of 46 per cent of the posts of Head or Deputy Head of special political missions, playing a key role in mediation efforts. Women also constituted 43 per cent of the

⁷ In South Sudan, the Khartoum Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Government and the Agwelek forces. Data from PA-X Peace Agreement Database, version 7. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, University of Edinburgh (accessed June 2023).

⁸ The Geneva International Discussions and the peace processes relating to Libya, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, but not Yemen.

staff of United Nations mediation support teams, up from 30 per cent in 2019, and dedicated gender and inclusion expertise was made available, including through the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Beyond the numbers, the Department and its senior leadership across the world – from Colombia to Iraq, to the Sudan – invested political capital to reinforce women’s meaningful participation, and advance women and peace and security priorities. In line with the Secretary-General’s commitments (S/2019/800) and Security Council mandates on this issue, the Department convened high-level strategy meetings on designing and supporting inclusive processes in the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In the Sudan, the meeting contributed to the establishment of a stand-alone women’s rights negotiating delegation, many of whom are currently active in women-led anti-war initiatives since the latest escalation. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the meeting informed the gender strategy for the country for 2023–2024 of the Office of the Special Envoy.

11. The Department of Peace Operations and the entities represented in United Nations country teams, in particular the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), also play a key role in advancing women’s meaningful participation in peace processes through senior leadership engagement and through technical, operational and other forms of support. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), for example, facilitated the participation of women as representatives in the third round of consultations for peace in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in a process led by the East African Community (EAC) and held in Nairobi in 2022. Of 110 representatives from civil society and communities, 40 per cent were women, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. After meeting with women survivors, the EAC facilitator endorsed two of their recommendations for inclusion in the road map of the Nairobi process. In stalled or blocked processes, it is important that the United Nations invest in consistent and long-term engagement with women political and civil society leaders to inform efforts to open space for peacemaking and support women’s leadership for peace. In Afghanistan, UN-Women continued to connect local women’s voices with the international community through direct or indirect engagement, including through the participation of Afghan women leaders and women in exile in international processes and mechanisms.

12. Beyond track 1 processes, investing in local mediation is critical for building the infrastructures for peace. In Myanmar, women in Yangon, Rakhine State and elsewhere across Myanmar have played a critical role in promoting social cohesion among women from different ethnic and religious communities.⁹ Case studies from Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen¹⁰ illustrate the diverse mediation roles women have taken on to resolve conflict and restore social cohesion in their communities, although they have been largely excluded from formal mediation roles. They have mediated ceasefires and a halt to violations against civilians, brokered the release of political prisoners, prevented and resolved tribal conflicts, and engaged in cross-line negotiations to secure access to water and other vital resources. In Yemen, the Office of the Special Envoy invited women local mediators from civil society to participate as advisers to the United Nations mediation team in the negotiations of May 2022 between the Government and the Houthis (who also call themselves Ansar Allah), regarding road openings. Two women civil society delegates attended the negotiations. These lessons demonstrate that local mediation can be a key entry point

⁹ S/2022/258.

¹⁰ See <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/06/womens-participation-in-local-mediation-lessons-from-iraq-libya-syria-and-yemen>.

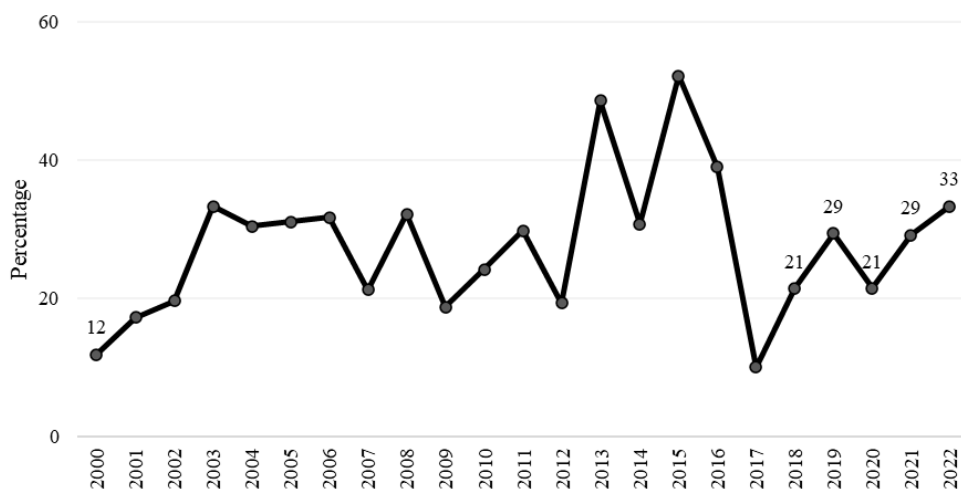
for women's participation in peacemaking when high-level negotiations are deadlocked or there is limited space for dialogue.

13. Peace agreements are key to creating the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable future. Research suggests that in 2022, 6 of the 18 peace agreements reached, or 33 per cent, included provisions referring to women, girls and gender.¹¹ This is a similar proportion to recent years, with the proportion of agreements that include gender references plateauing between 20 and 35 per cent each year (see figure I). Beyond that statistic, gender references varied in terms of subject matter and level of detail, and provisions regarding women's participation remained scarce. In 2022, the most substantive references to women's participation were agreed in the Sudan Political Framework Agreement, a direct result of the engagement of Sudanese women's rights advocates – both political party members and civil society – supported by the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The agreement, which is designed to facilitate the nation's political transition, stipulated that the representation of women at the national legislative and executive levels would be no less than 40 per cent. It also contained equality and human rights provisions in support of women's meaningful participation and protection, such as prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender, accountability for all forms of violence against women, and upholding the freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.¹² The widespread violence that broke out in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces halted its implementation. The security, human rights and humanitarian situation has deteriorated rapidly across the country, and mounting reports of conflict-related sexual violence are deeply concerning. While multiple ceasefires have been brokered and broken since the fighting began, the women of the Sudan have not, to date, been part of the negotiations, but they have continued to organize and advocate peace in their country and their role in shaping its future.

¹¹ Laura Wise and Fiona Knäussel, "Still searching for gender perspectives in peace agreements". Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, Edinburgh Law School, University of Edinburgh (2023). Available at: <https://peacerep.org/2023/08/14/gender-perspectives-peace-agreements/>.

¹² Ibid.

Figure I
Percentage of peace agreements with provisions referring to women, girls and gender, 2000–2022



Source: PA-X Peace Agreement Database, version 7. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, University of Edinburgh (accessed June 2023). Additional data regarding the Sudan Political Framework Agreement provided by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

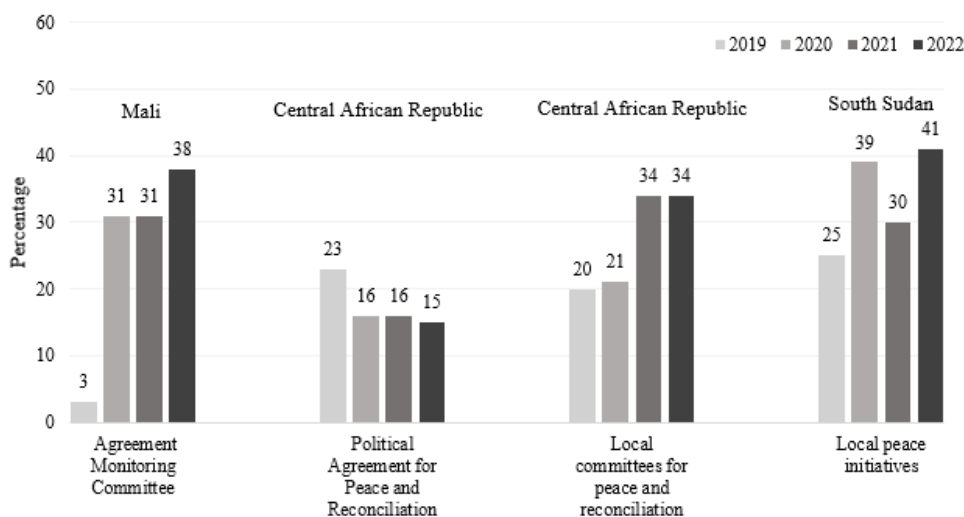
Note: Data analysed include inter-State and intra-State peace agreements, except for local peace agreements.

14. The fragility of peace agreements highlights the importance of ensuring their inclusive implementation, including gender-specific provisions. For instance, in briefings to the Security Council, women from civil society in South Sudan have raised alarm at the country's direction and the delays in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, drawing attention to unmet quotas for women at all levels of government and high levels of sexual violence. In Colombia, despite increased efforts to advance in peace implementation and important peace legislation promoting gender parity in Congress, women have expressed concern about the pace of implementation of the agreement and, in particular, that of the gender-related provisions, given the persisting violence in several regions of the country. It is critical that women leaders from conflict-affected settings be given the opportunity to brief the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and other intergovernmental bodies at the international level, in order to keep gender-related concerns high on the agenda in national peacemaking efforts.

15. There is a continued need to strengthen women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the implementation phase, including in the design and work of dedicated mechanisms. Available figures from peacekeeping contexts show mixed results, with women generally remaining underrepresented. In Mali, for instance, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) contributed to increasing the representation of women in the Agreement Monitoring Committee to 38 per cent in 2022, a notable improvement from 3 per cent in 2019 (see figure II). The Mali Chapter of the African Women Leaders Network played a crucial role in pushing towards meeting the 30 per cent gender quota requirement for women's representation in elected and appointed positions, including in the implementation mechanism. With the Mission scheduled to complete its withdrawal by December 2023, these gains must be secured. Beyond peacekeeping

settings and mechanisms, in which women's participation is currently tracked, data availability is low and remains an area in need of improvement.

Figure II
Percentage of women in peace agreement implementation mechanisms supported by United Nations peacekeeping missions, 2019–2022



Source: Department of Peace Operations, women and peace and security accountability framework.

16. Collecting data on women's participation and their roles in peace negotiations and the implementation of peace agreements for all ongoing processes has been challenging owing to the lack of a systematic approach among the various actors involved. UN-Women, with partners, is developing a new tool, a peace process tracker, to monitor trends across a set of indicators for tracking women's participation in peace processes globally and the gender responsiveness of peace agreements.

17. The Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, and the Commitment 2025 initiative led by Finland and Spain, are opportunities to substantially increase women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes by 2025, and to improve data and analysis. As of July 2023, 70 per cent of signatories to the Compact (144 out of 204) were implementing specific actions to strengthen women's meaningful participation in peace processes.¹³ At the time of writing, 44 per cent of national action plans on women and peace and security include explicit references to peace negotiations and mediation. Among dedicated regional plans and strategies, 9 out of 13 make direct reference to increasing women's representation in peace negotiations and mediation. Since 2015, many Member States and regional organizations have supported the establishment of regional mediator networks, with eight networks launched to date.¹⁴ Among these, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation established by the African Union, FemWise-Africa, was deployed to the peace processes in Chad and the Sudan in 2022.

¹³ See <https://wpscompact.org/monitoring-accountability/>.

¹⁴ Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), Nordic Women Mediators, Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, Arab Women Mediators Network, South-East Asian Network of Women Negotiators and Mediators, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators, Pacific Women Mediators Network.

18. There is a significant shortage of financing for women's meaningful participation, gender-responsive peace processes and the implementation of gender-related provisions in peace agreements. Alongside the United Nations, countries and regional organizations that sponsor or facilitate peace processes can conduct gender-responsive assessments of barriers and needs, and earmark funds when designing processes, participating in pledging conferences and budgeting financial support. Those allocations and spending need to be tracked and monitored. Increased support for existing dedicated mechanisms continues to be required. Since last year, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has doubled the number of organizations supported through its rapid response window for women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. To date, more than 100 civil society organizations in 22 countries have received targeted and flexible support to elevate their work for peace, de-escalate violence and address the barriers to women's participation in peace processes.

19. The United Nations is committed to strengthening support for women's direct participation in peace processes, including by advocating the use of reserved seats for women in negotiating teams, setting targets and making full use of the range of mechanisms for inclusion. There are many examples of best practice measures that have been applied to advance gender parity goals and increase women's meaningful participation, but those examples need to be systematically applied and backed by the requisite support and resources. The lack of political will shown by parties to conflict with respect to including women as equal partners remains a major barrier.

B. Promoting gender equality and women, peace and security in United Nations peacekeeping through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative

20. The prioritization of women and peace and security in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative has led to positive outcomes. Peacekeeping missions have been making efforts to increase the meaningful participation of women from host countries and the integration of gender perspectives across all areas of mandate delivery, as well as making use of their resources to advance gender equality. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, MONUSCO advocates women's political participation, runs weekly radio shows dedicated to the topic, engages with local networks of women mediators, provides technical support for the establishment of a reparations scheme for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and conducts mentoring sessions with women in the security forces. In the Central African Republic, nearly half of the participants in community violence reduction programmes were women. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) supported the women who participated in a local peace conference in Todach in March 2023, and their recommendations informed the agreement reached at that conference.¹⁵ The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in coordination with other United Nations system entities, supported the Lebanese Armed Forces in increase women's enrolment in the military college to 50 per cent for three years in a row and to establish its first Gender Department, which is one of the first in the region.

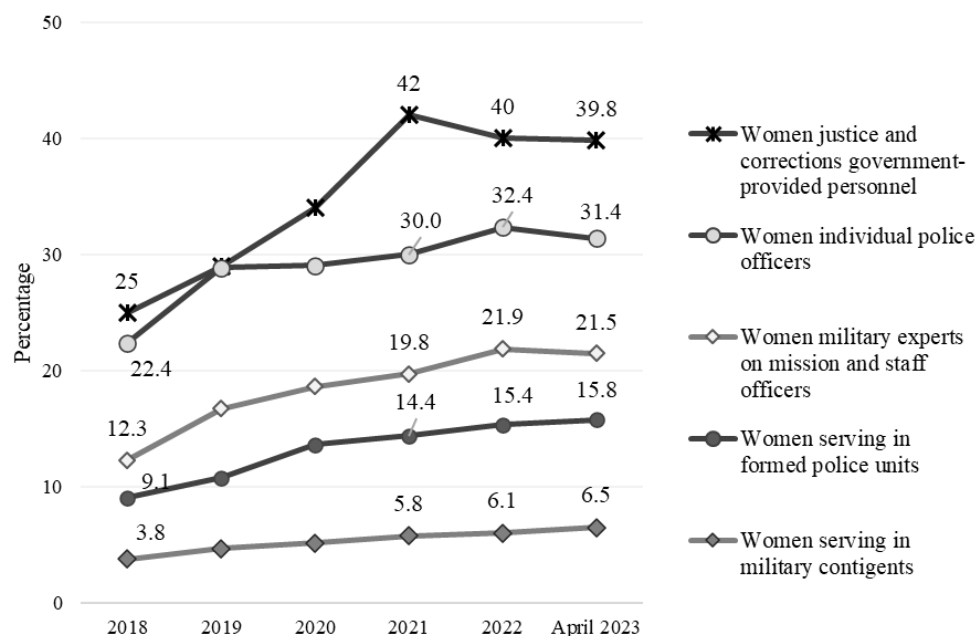
¹⁵ United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), "UNISFA, IOM, FAO and Concordis Broker Peace Agreement between Ngok Dinkas and Misseriyas in the Abyei Box", 23 March 2023. Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/unisfa-iom-fao-and-concordis-broker-peace-agreement-between-ngok-dinkas-and-misseriyas-abyei-box>.

21. Concerning protection, in Mali, sustained engagement by MINUSMA with the High Islamic Council of Mali culminated in the signing of a fatwa in January 2023, prohibiting conflict-related sexual violence. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) assisted women released from abduction in Western Equatoria, as well as nearly 100 children born of rape and at risk of being stigmatized and ostracized. UNMISS also continues to support the deployment and operations of mobile courts. In Raja, in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, for example, where no statutory courts had heard cases in six years, the deployment of a circuit court helped adjudicate 13 cases of gender-based violence, resulting in 13 convictions.

22. Among uniformed personnel, the Department of Peace Operations recorded its third year in a row meeting or exceeding the targets set out in the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028 for all categories, except military contingents. Troops are the bulk of the personnel deployed to peacekeeping operations and women’s representation is still very low, accounting for 6.5 per cent of military contingents, as of April 2023 (see figure III). This category is mainly made up of infantry battalions, in which women are the most underrepresented or from which they are even excluded in troop-contributing countries. The United Nations continues to deliver gender-responsive leadership training and guidance, and implement recruitment and outreach initiatives in support of gender parity, as well as to build enabling environments for uniformed personnel. For example, as of August 2023, 6 of the 14 personnel appointed as head or deputy head of a police component were women. The proactive measures undertaken by peacekeeping missions and Member States in the context of the uniformed gender parity strategy, and efforts such as the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, which has been renewed for the period from 2022 to 2027, are having an impact. To date, the Elsie Initiative Fund has supported 14 security institutions in conducting an evidence-based assessment of barriers that limit women’s deployment.

Figure III

Proportion of women in military and police personnel by type of position, and justice and corrections government-provided personnel in United Nations peace operations, December 2018–April 2023



Source: Department of Peace Operations, data accessed May 2023.

23. Women make up between 20 and 30 per cent of civilian staff in the largest peacekeeping missions. That proportion has not increased. United Nations Volunteers have contributed to gender parity in peacekeeping missions. The representation of women among United Nations Volunteers supporting United Nations peacekeeping missions increased to 42 per cent in 2022, compared with 39 per cent in 2021.

24. Improved gender balance among peacekeepers has strengthened the delivery of peace operations mandates and the commitments made under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, including the commitments to building trust with host communities and strengthening peacekeepers' situational awareness. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mixed and female engagement teams conducted hundreds of long-range patrols to remote areas in the eastern provinces, thereby enhancing the extent to which gender perspectives are reflected in situation analyses and threat mitigation plans. The inclusion of women in explosive ordnance risk education teams significantly increased the number of women beneficiaries of such programmes.

25. The implementation of the gender parity strategy and the women and peace and security commitments in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative have become political priorities for United Nations peacekeeping. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement and work to be done to achieve those goals. For example, among those peacekeeping activities that are reported on with data disaggregated by sex, women remain underrepresented. There is also a need for stronger gender analysis that informs mission planning and decision-making at all stages, including in transitions.

C. Promoting women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding

26. Even when they are excluded from peace tables and the halls of power, women are often celebrated for building peace from the ground up. Their successes are not often publicized and they receive little support. The United Nations is making efforts to change this. In 2022, 58 per cent of meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission were informed by briefings from women peacebuilders, representing an increase from 52 per cent in 2021. United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions have been instrumental in supporting women's peacebuilding efforts at the local level. In South Sudan, women made up 41 per cent of participants in local peace initiatives supported by the peacekeeping mission, an increase from 30 per cent in 2021. In Western Equatoria, these initiatives supported traditional leaders adhering to the 35 per cent quota for women, as set out in the peace agreement. In Abyei, women's representation in the new community protection committees reached 25 per cent, and UNISFA supported the formation of committees made up only of women from the Misseriya, Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities. In Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) played a significant role in ensuring women's representation in an initiative led by the Speaker of the House of the People to resolve an internal political dispute in the South-West State and in peace committees to address a conflict between two clans in the Matabaan area. Peacekeeping missions have used quick-impact projects to provide physical space for women's groups and their work. In Mali, the mission supported the establishment of a multifunctional centre for 30 women's associations in Mopti. The participation of women in local peacebuilding mechanisms is identified as a benchmark in the transition plans of several missions, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Haiti.

27. The United Nations continued to support women's networks of local mediators in many countries. In Lebanon, UN-Women established 19 women's peacebuilding and mediation groups, engaging hundreds of women across a variety of age groups, geographical areas and political and religious affiliations, implementing community-

focused actions that promote conflict prevention, mitigation and dialogue. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, programmes supported by the Peacebuilding Fund reached hundreds of young people in local peace committees, ensuring that women and young people from both the Twa and Bantu communities influenced decision-making at the local level for the first time, and providing services to both communities, including the construction or rehabilitation of schools, youth and women's centres, and one maternity clinic.

28. Despite such progress, women continue to be underrepresented in broad-based national dialogues, where inclusion should be paramount and gender parity should be achievable. For example, only 17 per cent of the 450 participants in the republican dialogue held in the Central African Republic in 2022 were women, and several national dialogues, even those supported by the United Nations, have fallen below 40 per cent of women among participants.

III. Update on progress, gaps and challenges across other areas of the women and peace and security agenda

A. Protecting and promoting the human rights and leadership of women and girls in conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies

29. In his previous report (S/2022/740), the Secretary-General provided details of widespread attacks against women human rights defenders in conflict-affected settings. That worrisome trend has continued. Between May 2021 and April 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented incidents of reprisal and intimidation against 172 women, girls, women human rights defenders and civil society organizations working in the field of human rights, who were targeted for their cooperation with the United Nations.¹⁶ OHCHR also verified the killings of 34 women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries in 2022,¹⁷ but this is likely only a fraction of the real number of cases. Harassment, threats and disinformation against individuals on digital platforms, which are insufficiently addressed by social media companies, are often followed by violence in real life.

30. In many cases, women human rights defenders are forced to leave their country, but they often lack support for their journey. A study conducted by VOICE¹⁸ found that 42 per cent of Afghan women human rights defenders and leaders had not received any basic assistance during their resettlement processes, and most reported that they had gained access to Kabul airport on the basis of personal contacts and resources. Similarly, many Yemeni women human rights defenders who relocated outside Yemen to escape arbitrary detention and life-threatening situations and successfully registered as refugees, have been waiting for years for resettlement opportunities, unable to move on with their lives and, in many cases, not allowed to work, according to independent researchers.

31. The United Nations and other international partners are strengthening their provision of support to women human rights defenders. There has been a notable improvement in the attention focused by United Nations entities and bodies on this issue since October 2022. The Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on

¹⁶ Disaggregated data provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

¹⁷ Disaggregated data on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.10.1 provided by OHCHR.

¹⁸ See VOICE, "Taking Myself out of the Darkness: Afghan Women Human Rights Defenders' Fight for Recognition", November 2022. Available at <https://voiceamplified.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/VOICE-Report-Afghanistan-WHRDs.pdf>.

the situation of human rights defenders devoted her annual report to the General Assembly to the situation of women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict and crisis-affected settings.¹⁹ UN-Women and OHCHR partnered with other entities to enhance the United Nations system's advocacy, accountability and protection support in such situations. In 2022, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund of the United Nations introduced a funding window for women human rights defenders and was able to provide support to 214 women and their 553 dependants within a few months of operation. In recent years, over half of the beneficiaries of the European Union programme to deliver emergency grants to human rights defenders at risk were women or belonged to sexual minorities. In Colombia, a UN-Women programme has reached more than 7,000 women human rights defenders at risk, including through emergency and rapid response funds.

32. United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions are strengthening support to women human rights defenders, including through making public statements to condemn such attacks; engaging with women human rights defenders to amplify their message and raise awareness of their situations at the level of relevant national and international stakeholders; visiting women human rights defenders at risk; advocating their release if incarcerated; and monitoring violence against women, including in the context of hate speech on social media and during elections. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO supports the temporary or permanent relocation of human rights defenders to safer locations, helping 17 women human rights defenders in 2022.

33. Women human rights defenders are on the frontlines of the fight for women's rights in conflict-affected countries. Over the past year, violations of women's rights by parties to conflict continued. In Afghanistan, the Taliban's widespread and systematic discrimination of Afghan women and girls has raised allegations of gender persecution, which is a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute and a violation of the rights to equality and non-discrimination.²⁰ In Yemen, the Houthis continue to restrict women's movement and have also been accused of detaining hundreds of women and girls in the Central Prison in Sana'a on trumped-up adultery charges and of threatening to publish compromising images of women detainees or their family members.²¹ In the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Security Council-listed terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham has repeatedly detained women in order to stifle political dissent.²² In Government-controlled areas, women survivors of detention reported being subjected to different types of sexual violence, including rape, threat of rape, sexual torture, abuse and humiliation.²³ In central and northern Mali, violent extremist groups seek to remove women from the public sphere and exclude girls from schools.²⁴ In the Islamic Republic of Iran, after the death of Jina Mahsa Amini while in detention sparked women-led mass protests and civil disobedience across the country, hundreds of Iranian schoolgirls were hit with toxic gas.²⁵

34. Often, legislation on women's rights or on protection from gender-based violence is blocked for years. In Iraq, a draft law against domestic violence has stalled since being introduced to parliament in 2014. In Somalia, the Sexual Offences Bill adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers in 2018 has yet to be passed by

¹⁹ A/78/131.

²⁰ A/HRC/53/21.

²¹ S/2023/130, annex 29.

²² S/2023/586.

²³ See, for example: S/2023/413 and S/2022/272; see also A/HRC/31/CRP.1 and A/HRC/37/72/CRP.1.

²⁴ S/2023/361.

²⁵ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/iran-deliberate-poisoning-schoolgirls-further-evidence-continuous-violence>.

parliament. Politicians and activists who speak in favour of the Sexual Offences Bill are subjected to harassment and defamation on social media.²⁶ The United Nations has supported women activists and Libyan legislators working on a draft law to combat violence against women for several years. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the adoption of a family protection bill has been pending since the early 2000s.

35. Meanwhile, the United Nations verified 2,455 reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2022,²⁷ with the highest numbers recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It should be understood that these numbers are an undercount, as many cases go unreported or cannot be verified.²⁸ Sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, torture, political repression and terrorism, compounded by militarization, the illicit proliferation of arms and unconstitutional changes of government. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 20,000 survivors of sexual violence sought support services in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu the first three months of 2023 alone, and there are reports of about 1,000 locations in Goma where displaced women and girls are forced to engage in “survival sex”.²⁹ When war broke out in the Sudan, hundreds of cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported by civil society, service providers and authorities in Darfur and Khartoum, and in refugee camps for Ethiopians and Eritreans.³⁰

36. The lives of women and girls are affected in many other ways by conflict, including by significant gaps in the comprehensive and systematic delivery of the full range of sexual and reproductive health services. Thousands of pregnant Sudanese women in need of emergency obstetric care were put at immediate risk of death when the conflict erupted. Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and services are still not always viewed as life-saving and essential by all actors and not always included in the initial phase of humanitarian responses.

37. As the world reaches record levels of hunger, the gender gap in food security remains. In 2022, more than 1 in every 4 women (27.8 per cent) globally experienced moderate or severe food insecurity, higher than the rate among men (25.4 per cent).³¹ In Afghanistan, nearly 100 per cent of women-headed households experienced insufficient food consumption for most of 2022.

38. Increased attention to and reporting on mental health issues affecting women and girls in emergency settings are crucial. The United Nations is also emphasizing the importance of disability inclusion in prevention and protection strategies. Despite calls by the Security Council in its resolution 2475 (2019) for the protection of persons with disabilities in conflict, the earthquake in the Syrian Arab Republic in February 2023 was a stark reminder of the additional difficulties faced by women with disabilities, as systems and structures set up to respond to emergencies do not always have accessibility in mind, including in terms of supporting women with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities or persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, for whom seeking assistance can further exacerbate their vulnerability.

39. Women face many different risks during and after displacement. In Mali, in the town of Ménaka, 60 per cent of displaced women and girls reported being subjected

²⁶ S/PV.9267.

²⁷ See <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/factsheet2022-2.pdf>.

²⁸ S/2023/413.

²⁹ See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/twenty-four-un-entities-urge-immediate-action-to-protect-women-and-girls-sexual-violence-and-around>.

³⁰ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/un-experts-alarmed-reported-widespread-use-rape-and-sexual-violence-against>.

³¹ See UN-Women, “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the gender snapshot 2023”.

to abduction and forced marriage. In Gao, approximately 30 per cent of women and girls experienced sexual violence before and during their displacement.³² As women and girls are a majority of the millions of civilians displaced in Ukraine and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, addressing the risks of trafficking and abuse has been a central feature of the humanitarian response.

40. Another human rights issue that is often raised by women advocates in conflict-affected countries is the fate of detained, disappeared and missing persons, including not just thousands of women but the larger number of men, whose absence has a profound impact on the lives of the women and girls in their families. In June 2023, the General Assembly, in its resolution [77/301](#), decided to establish an Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, under the auspices of the United Nations, and also decided that the new mechanism would engage with women's organizations in a regular and sustained manner. The issue is also relevant in other countries, such as Libya, where the refusal to issue certificates of detention prevents hundreds of families from accessing basic services and exercising their rights, pushing women and their dependants into poverty.³³ Such difficulties are further compounded in countries where members of society are already unrecognized by authorities, or lack legal identity documents, as is the case for many Indigenous women, as well as women of national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minorities, who live on the fringes of society owing to systemic discrimination driven by state laws and policies regarding their identity.

41. Several Member States have taken measures to respond to these injustices, including to welcome women and girls fleeing war and persecution. Greater attention is still needed to address challenges linked to obtaining and extending visas and residency and work permits. The African Union is working on a convention on eliminating violence against women and girls. In March 2023, the European Union imposed sanctions on nine individuals and three entities for violating women's rights in conflict-affected countries. In 2022, the Spotlight Initiative, including in partnership with the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, reached more than 230,000 women and girls in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings, including by providing tens of thousands of Afghan women and girls with psychosocial counselling and livelihood support, and enabling hundreds of women's rights organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Emergency deployments of gender-based violence specialists supported by the Safe from the Start initiative ensured the provision of life-saving services for over 1 million displaced persons.

42. As the number of women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance increased for yet another year, there were some improvements in the humanitarian community's efforts to integrate gender equality considerations. The establishment of women advisory mechanisms in Afghanistan and in Gaziantep, Türkiye, facilitated the engagement of women leaders and organizations in humanitarian response planning, resourcing and decision-making. The representation of local women's organizations on the advisory boards of country-based pooled funds increased, including in complex contexts such as Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Sudan or Ukraine. In Somalia, the representation of local women's organizations in coordination mechanisms to address gender-based violence in humanitarian settings increased from 19 to 29 per cent between 2021 and 2022. In 2022, 14 countries and territories in which the United Nations has active mine action operations had a gender strategy for mine action, compared with 6 in 2018.

³² See [S/2022/1005](#).

³³ See [S/2023/248](#).

43. Such progress notwithstanding, the ability to reach women and girls, or even to employ women in humanitarian delivery, has been seriously challenged in such countries as Afghanistan and Yemen, thereby testing the international community's ability to maintain its adherence to core humanitarian principles. Two weeks after the Taliban banned Afghan women from working in non-governmental organizations, in December 2022, a survey by UN-Women showed that 94 per cent of women-led national civil society organizations had either fully or partially ceased their activities, and they would soon be unable to pay the salaries of thousands of Afghan women who were the main breadwinners of their families.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, the wider humanitarian community reported drastic cuts in their ability to reach women and implement many of their interventions, notably in the areas of agricultural extension, mine clearance, health and education.³⁵ Those restrictions were further expanded when the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs verbally notified the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan on 5 April 2023 of a decision to impose severe restrictions on national women staff working for the United Nations with immediate effect. In quarterly consultations undertaken by UN-Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the overwhelming majority of Afghan women – urban and rural – who are still in the country agree that improving women's rights should be as important to international partners as is improving access to basic services, humanitarian assistance and basic human needs. In Yemen, leaders of women's organizations have expressed concern that humanitarian actors continue to treat the restrictions on women humanitarian workers as procedural hurdles that need to be negotiated or worked around, rather than as part of a policy goal to erase women from public life altogether, including schools, universities, employment and politics.

B. Disarmament and arms control, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

44. In 2022, the United Nations strengthened efforts to mainstream gender across disarmament and arms control policy. Rising geopolitical tensions have increased the urgency of this work but also made it more challenging, as military build-ups accelerate. World military expenditure increased in 2022 for the eighth consecutive year, reaching an all-time high of \$2.24 trillion. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation was one of the drivers of the growth in spending last year; military expenditure in Europe rose by 13 per cent, which according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute was the largest annual increase in total European spending in the post-cold-war era.³⁶

45. Of the 66 resolutions on disarmament adopted by the General Assembly in 2022, 20 included references to gender and only 1 included a reference to diversity. Disarmament, gender equality and human rights are not issues that can be separated. Arms proliferation continues to pose existential threats and development financing is insufficient, both of which are matters of grave concern to everyone. Work is still needed to better anchor disarmament into national women and peace and security policies, and vice versa. Among the 107 national action plans on women and peace and security, only 33 included direct references to arms control, ammunition

³⁴ See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/01/gender-alert-no-3-out-of-jobs-into-poverty-the-impact-of-the-ban-on-afghan-women-working-in-ngos>.

³⁵ S/2023/207.

³⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges", 24 April 2023. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2023/world-military-expenditure-reaches-new-record-high-european-spending-surges>.

management and/or disarmament in their monitoring frameworks. At the open debate of the Security Council on women and peace and security, held on 20 October 2022, only 14 per cent of statements mentioned weapons or weapons technology.

46. Amid progressively dangerous rhetoric on nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons passed an important milestone in 2022 when its First Meeting of States Parties produced a strong declaration against nuclear threats and an ambitious action plan to advance the goals of the Treaty, including its gender provisions. Discussions on the military use of artificial intelligence have continued. In many forums, several States have expressed concern regarding unintended bias in artificial intelligence in the military field and have called for steps to be taken to reduce such bias.

47. Another welcome development is the increased participation of women in the open-ended working group on the security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025, in which the average share of women delegates is 37 per cent. The establishment of the Women in International Security and Cyberspace Fellowship contributed to this increase. In most multilateral forums on non-proliferation and disarmament, women represent about one third of delegates, and their representation drops further among heads of delegation.³⁷ The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has continued to advocate for gender targets and inclusivity in order to enhance women’s leadership in disarmament.

48. In his reports on conflict-related sexual violence, the Secretary-General has detailed linkages between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and sexual violence. In response, the new United Nations framework for preventing conflict-related sexual violence identified arms control and disarmament as a priority area for action in prevention efforts. While data remain scarce, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), in a new report, noted that where reporting on weapons is available, 70 to 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve a weapon, in particular firearms.³⁸

49. Available data from countries with an established national small arms coordination agency show that greater efforts are needed to improve women’s participation in such mechanisms. In 25 out of the 43 countries with data, men remain significantly overrepresented. Among the barriers that women face in technical arms control are gender stereotyping, discriminatory attitudes from colleagues and supervisors, as well as discriminatory policies and laws limiting women’s role in security sector institutions.³⁹

50. The United Nations continued to advance gender-responsive prevention and response efforts, including in settings such as Haiti, where spiralling gang violence is threatening peace and security. The surge in sexual violence committed by gangs in Haiti has been facilitated by their access to high-calibre weapons and ammunition trafficked from abroad, including military-grade sniper rifles, belt-fed machine guns and semi-automatic pistols. Haitian women have played a key role in promoting local mediation and community-based violence reduction initiatives and have actively

³⁷ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølvi Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, “Still behind the curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy”, 2019. Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/still-behind-curve>.

³⁸ Hana Salama, “Addressing Weapons in Conflict Related Sexual Violence: the Arms control and Disarmament Toolbox” (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), Geneva, 2023). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/addressing-weapons-conflict-related-sexual-violence-arms-control-and-disarmament>.

³⁹ Hana Salama and Emma Bjertén-Günther, “Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women’s Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management” (UNIDIR, Geneva, 2021). Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/women-managing-weapons>.

participated in community dialogue platforms supported by the United Nations, including on preventing and eliminating the use of sexual violence by armed gangs.

51. The United Nations helped to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of national strategies and programmes in several settings. For example, the United Nations supported disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Mozambique, where women ex-combatants were the focus of tailored socioeconomic reintegration opportunities, and in Somalia, where two out of the five rehabilitation centres supporting the reintegration of individuals who have disengaged from Al-Shabaab cater to women only. Nevertheless, many challenges persist. In the Lake Chad basin, research by IOM demonstrated the need to protect the rights of women and women's organizations throughout the reintegration process and build capacities among government and civil society to address women's needs. Women and girls who have defected from different factions of Boko Haram are in a particularly vulnerable position, as many of them reside with their children in transition centres, camps for internally displaced persons and other locations where they are vulnerable to further exploitation.

C. Political participation and representation

52. Women's involvement in public and political life has expanded. Nevertheless, achieving gender parity in political life is far off at all levels of decision-making. As of July 2023, women were Heads of State or Government in 27 countries. The global proportion of women in parliaments has reached 26.5 per cent.⁴⁰ The proportion of women in national parliaments in conflict-affected countries remains low, at 23 per cent. Women's representation in local government is higher than at the national level, with women holding 35.5 per cent of elected seats in local deliberative bodies worldwide and 24.5 per cent of those seats in conflict-affected countries.

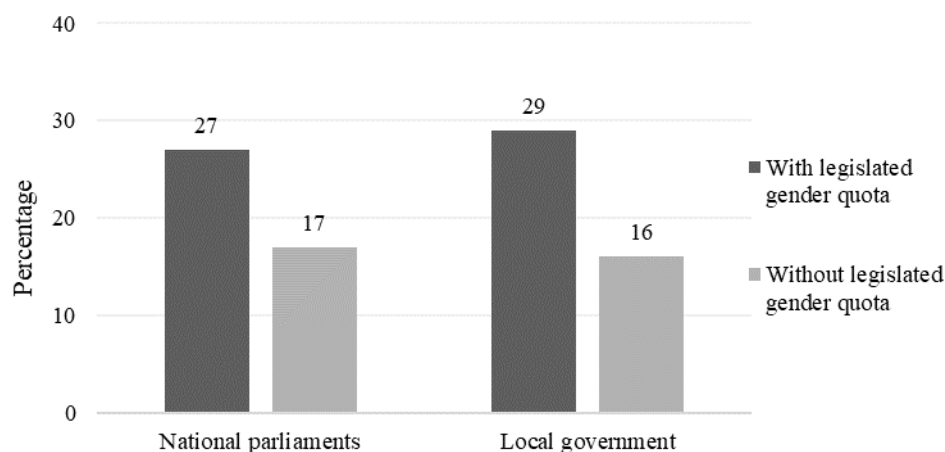
53. In conflict-affected countries where legislated gender quotas are in place, the proportion of women legislators is 27 per cent.⁴¹ In conflict-affected countries without quotas, women make up only 17 per cent of parliamentarians.⁴² A significant difference can also be seen at the local level. In conflict-affected countries with legislated gender quotas, women held 29 per cent of seats in elected local government, compared with 16 per cent in similar countries without such quotas (see figure IV).

⁴⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN-Women, "Women in politics: 2023". Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>.

⁴¹ United Nations Gender Quota Portal, available at <https://genderquota.org/>. Data as of 1 January 2023.

⁴² UN-Women calculations based on IPU and UN-Women, "Women in politics: 2023".

Figure IV
Proportion of women in national parliaments and in local government in conflict-affected countries (with and without legislated gender quota), 2022



Source: Data on proportion of women in national parliaments and local government from Sustainable Development Goals global database, accessed July 2023. Data on gender quotas from the Gender Quota Portal, accessed July 2023.

54. In several conflict-affected countries, political crises and difficult negotiations to form governments were also characterized by the almost complete absence of women. In Libya, the United Nations provided technical support to the 6 + 6 joint committee formed by the House of Representatives and the High State Council to prepare electoral laws, which despite United Nations advocacy did not include any women. In Iraq, despite the unprecedented levels of women's representation in parliament, women were largely absent from government formation negotiations and political efforts to resolve the impasse, as there were no women in senior positions among the ranks of the mainstream political parties and coalitions participating in the meetings.

55. In order to advance the implementation of the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights and Our Common Agenda, UN-Women conducted a global review of national laws on gender quotas, which was made available through the Gender Quota Portal with the aim of supporting United Nations advocacy and assistance efforts in promoting temporary special measures. Good practices in this regard informed coordinated advocacy and technical support by the United Nations to national partners during parliamentary discussions on passing quota bills. In Sierra Leone, as a result of a new legislation on quotas, the proportion of elected women Members of Parliament more than doubled, from 13 to 28 per cent. In some countries with legislated gender quotas, laws can be strengthened to set ambitious targets, enforce placement rules and implement sanctions for non-compliance.

56. Structural barriers, discrimination and harmful gender-based norms, online and offline violence and gender-based hate speech continue to undermine women's participation, and men in leadership positions often lack the political will to disrupt the status quo. Currently, women account for only 23 per cent of cabinet ministers globally and 20 per cent in conflict-affected countries. Nine countries have no women ministers.⁴³ Violence against women in politics affects women at all levels of political engagement, often deterring women from public life. For example, the Vice-President

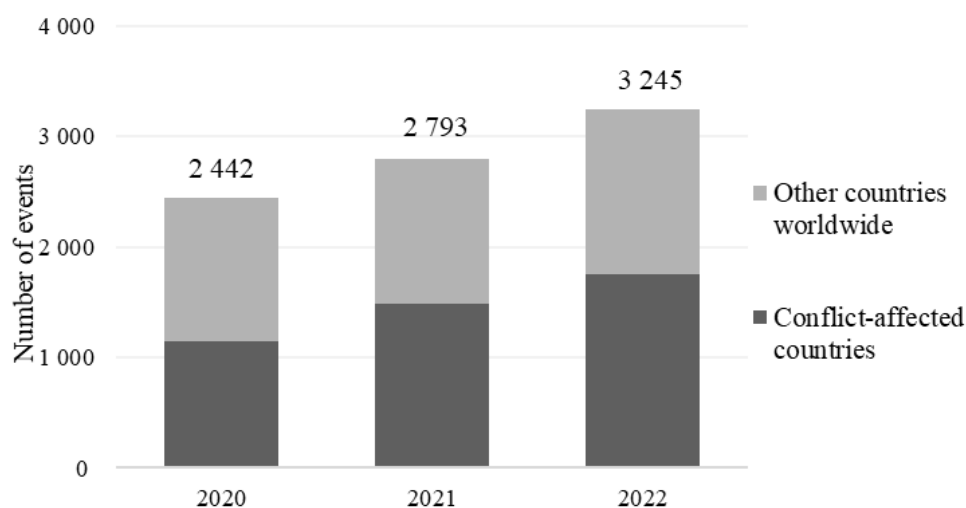
⁴³ Ibid.

of Colombia, Francia Márquez, who is also a well-recognized human rights defender and environmental activist, survived an assassination attempt in January 2023. Also in January, gunmen killed a former Member of Parliament of Afghanistan, Mursal Nabizada, at her home in Kabul.

57. Alongside violence against women in politics, other violent events with women as targets have spread widely in conflict-affected countries. Data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project show that in 2022, women and girls were the main targets in more than 3,200 political violence events worldwide,⁴⁴ and more than half took place in conflict-affected countries, where the number of incidents of political violence targeting women increased by 1.5 times between 2020 and 2022 (see figure V). Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria and Ukraine recorded steep increases, by more than twofold, in the incidence of violence targeting women, including in the forms of physical attacks, abduction, forced disappearance, sexual violence or mob violence.

Figure V

Number of incidents of violence targeting women, 2020–2022



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, available at <https://acleddata.com/>, accessed 3 October 2023.

Note: The criteria to define conflict-affected countries are set out in footnote 3 of the present report.

D. Economic recovery and access to resources

58. In previous reports, the Secretary-General has highlighted that large-scale reconstruction and recovery efforts after conflict significantly underfund women's priorities, that women remain a minority of those benefiting from temporary employment and productive livelihood projects, that crises affect women disproportionately because they lose their jobs first, eat less and take up additional unpaid care responsibilities, and that discriminatory gender norms impede women's access to land, property, inheritance, credit, technology and banking. In many conflict-affected countries, such discrimination is the direct result of political

⁴⁴ These events refer to cases of direct targeting of women, such as attacks, abductions, or riots and mob violence when the victims were predominantly or entirely women or girls.

decisions. In Afghanistan, the economic loss due to the sharp drop in women's employment represents a large share of the economic contraction of a country where the number of people in poverty skyrocketed from 19 million in 2020 to 34 million in 2022.

59. The difference in the level of economic autonomy of men and women is even more pronounced in times of crisis. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, a large gender gap in labour force participation persists. In 2022, the employment-to-population ratio for women and men were 11 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively.⁴⁵ In Iraq, women-headed households in camps for internally displaced persons are three times more likely to face unemployment compared with other households. In South Sudan, women are four times less likely to hold waged employment and have 30 per cent less access to financing. In Mali, women's participation in the economy is 26 percentage points lower than men's according to World Bank data.⁴⁶ In Colombia, where thousands of former combatants benefit from productive projects to help with their reintegration, more than a third of female participants also provide unpaid care services, compared with only 2 per cent of male participants, and this disparity hinders women's access to reintegration benefits and decision-making.⁴⁷ Among Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries, the rate of underemployment for women is higher than for men, and between 5 and 35 per cent of women identify a lack of access to childcare as a barrier to finding a job.⁴⁸ In the Syrian Arab Republic, a high percentage of income-generating activities was done by women inside their homes through informal economic activities, and such activities became untenable owing to the destruction of homes and buildings after the earthquake in February 2023. The gender gap in access to banking accounts can be substantial in several conflict-affected countries. For example, when faced with an unexpected emergency, 28 per cent of women in the Niger found it impossible to come up with funds within 30 days, compared with 17 per cent of men.⁴⁹

60. Women's inclusion in economy recovery and reconstruction is crucial in the pursuit of peace. This is also the objective of many United Nations programmes in conflict-affected countries, whether through direct cash transfers, or livelihood support and temporary employment, or support for women cooperatives or savings and loans associations. In Haiti, the International Labour Organization ensured gender parity among the beneficiaries of its support to the cocoa and breadfruit production sectors. In Iraq, almost half of the women trained by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization found jobs in the reconstruction and rehabilitation sectors, as part of the project to revive the Old Cities of Mosul and Basrah. In the Liptako-Gourma cross-border region of the Sahel, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and IOM facilitated the greater participation of women in land commissions, leading to greater acceptance of their involvement in mediation and conflict prevention, and their inclusion in local consultations on transhumance.

61. These programmes only scratch the surface, however, and they are often not scaled up, even when they show clear benefits. More impactful changes to women's economic security require an ambitious reform of our economic and financial systems. Just as important as initiatives to alleviate the debt burden of States affected

⁴⁵ See ILOSTAT explorer, available at https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer54/?lang=en&segment=indicator&id=EMP_DWAP_SEX_AGE_RT_A.

⁴⁶ World Bank, Gender Data Portal.

⁴⁷ See S/2023/222.

⁴⁸ See <https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Final%20English%20livelihoods%20brief%20%20June.pdf>.

⁴⁹ World Bank, Global Financial Inclusion Database, 2021. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalindex/Data>.

by conflict and expand the use of special drawing rights, there is an equally urgent need for much greater investment in gender-responsive social protection systems that can protect women in countries prone to crises, from direct cash transfers – which research suggests significantly reduce mortality rates among women in low-income countries –⁵⁰ to maternity leave and social pensions, as well as new definitions of economic measures that include time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, and that take into account the social and economic costs of violence against women.

E. Rule of law and women’s access to justice

62. Effective and inclusive rule of law institutions are pivotal for advancing gender equality. This is one of the core tenets of the New Vision of the Secretary-General for the Rule of Law, developed in the framework of Our Common Agenda.⁵¹ The full, equal and meaningful participation of women in rule of law institutions, including in leadership roles, can galvanize greater responsiveness and accountability with respect to the achievement of gender equality and the abolition of discriminatory laws, policies and practices. In 2021, 43 per cent of professional judges or magistrates in criminal justice institutions were women, an increase from 34 per cent in 2010.⁵² In transitional justice processes during the reporting period, women represented 55 per cent of magistrates in the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia, and 20 per cent and 36 per cent of commissioners on truth commissions in Mali and Colombia, respectively.

63. Noteworthy progress was made towards accountability for crimes of sexual violence and gender-based violence. A court in Germany delivered the third verdict of genocide against a member of Da’esh for the enslavement and abuse of Yazidi women in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic issued its first trial conviction, which included sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity. In Guinea, the national trial of individuals responsible for the massacre and mass sexual violence of September 2009 opened. In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace included gender persecution in indictments for the first time, and announced that it will open a case 11 on sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes committed out of prejudice, hate and discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, identity and diverse sexual orientation within the framework of the armed conflict. At the international level, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court confirmed Dominic Ongwen’s sentence for 61 crimes against humanity and war crimes, including forced pregnancy and other gender-based crimes. Furthermore, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court adopted its policy on the crime of gender persecution. Finally, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 adopted a comprehensive gender strategy and implementation plan. In a small but growing number of contexts, reparations programmes have also been established for victims and survivors of violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. For example, during the reporting period, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali adopted

⁵⁰ Aaron Richterman and others, “The effects of cash transfers on adult and child mortality in low- and middle-income countries”, *Nature*, vol. 618, 15 June 2023.

⁵¹ New Vision of the Secretary-General for the Rule of Law, available at <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/New-Vision-of-the-Secretary-General-for-the-Rule-of-Law.pdf>. See also A/75/982, para. 23.

⁵² Data disaggregated by sex available for 65 countries, including those with data for 2010 or nearest year before 2015, and data for 2021 or latest year since 2017. Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), dataUNODC, available at <https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-cjs-personnel>, accessed August 2023.

new laws and Iraq allocated \$19 million to a reparations fund for Yazidi survivors. In Kosovo,⁵³ UN-Women continues to support four women's organizations that help survivors apply for reparations from the Commission to Recognize and Verify Survivors of Sexual Violence during the Kosovo War. Almost 2,000 survivors have submitted applications to date.

64. The United Nations system continued to support inclusive rule of law institutions and advance women's access to justice, including through the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law, which established a working group on gender justice in March 2023. In 2022, 22 out of 52 conflict-affected countries (42 per cent) undertook reforms towards effective, accessible and gender-responsive criminal justice systems, often with support from the United Nations. In Mozambique, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund provided training to 30 members of community courts on responding to gender-based violence. In Abyei, advocacy by UNISFA led to the appointment of 16 women to traditional courts. In South Sudan, UNMISS supported the deployment of courts and investigators, resulting in 15 convictions for sexual violence, and the Mission also supported organizations that provide assistance to victims and witnesses in cases of gender-based violence.

65. In several contexts, women's access to justice continues to be denied. In Afghanistan, women have been erased from every function in the legal sector and women judges, lawyers, prosecutors and court staff have been replaced by men. Institutions and infrastructure supporting the legal rights of women have been dismantled and replaced, in some cases, with entities aimed at policing the lives of women. Women and girls are forbidden from gaining access to institutions and lawyers without the consent of and being accompanied by their male relatives, thereby severely restricting their access to justice. Other threats and challenges persist elsewhere. For example, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the independence of judges and lawyers indicated that women judges in El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala have reported being subjected to violence, simply because they are women, when hearing or ruling on certain cases ([A/76/142](#)).

F. Security sector reform and women's participation in national security sector institutions

66. Promoting gender equality and women's participation in the security sector is critical for building more accountable, inclusive and responsive institutions. In its resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council encouraged Member States to develop security sector reform strategies and programmes that remove legal, institutional and regulatory barriers to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the security sector and to increase their representation at all levels. In his report on strengthening security sector reform ([S/2022/280](#)), the Secretary-General committed to strengthening the United Nations system's capacity to mainstream gender in all forms of United Nations support for security sector reform, including by publishing the first-ever global report on gender equality and the status of women in the defence sector, supporting barrier assessments that identify obstacles to women's participation in national security sectors, establishing vetting, oversight and accountability mechanisms to end impunity for violence against women within and by security institutions, and fostering their inclusion in negotiations on security provisions of peace agreements, national security policies, expenditures or laws.

⁵³ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#).

67. Grievances arising from abuses committed by security forces can become a trigger of conflict, and the lack of representation and diversity in the security sector undermines its effectiveness and erodes trust among the people it serves, with the result that they often turn to other actors for protection. Despite those circumstances, the Security Council has only integrated gender considerations into 6 of the 11 missions with explicit mandates on security sector reform.⁵⁴ Only 13 per cent of ministers of defence globally are women, and discrimination and harassment are still commonplace in many countries' security sectors, with women often prohibited from serving in combat positions and subjected to unequal conditions of employment that inhibit their promotion and retention, as well as being subjected sexual harassment and abuse. In conflict-affected countries undergoing transitions and the implementation of a peace agreement, women are extremely underrepresented in committees dealing with the security sector. In South Sudan, despite the 35 per cent quota for women, women's representation in the three security-related committees ranges from 11 to 17 per cent. In Mali, women make up 0.6 per cent of the Operational Coordination Mechanism, consisting of mixed units from the national army and the signatory movements, and nearly 9 per cent in the National Council for Security Sector Reform. Similar committees in other parts of the world also feature such underrepresentation of women.

68. Barriers to women's participation in security sector institutions expose the deep-seated patriarchal beliefs which, over time, have shaped institutional culture and normalized discrimination. In order to address these challenges, the United Nations supports gender equality-oriented reforms in national security sectors. In South Sudan, this has led to the development of a nationwide gender assessment of the security sector, the establishment of security sector women's networks across five of the security services in the country and the finalization of training modules for national authorities on gender mainstreaming in security sector reform. In Somalia, 40 per cent of the members of the civilian oversight committee that inspects detention facilities were women. In the Central African Republic, women now make up a quarter of the police officers and one fifth of the gendarmes deployed across the country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, nearly all of the women needed to reach the Government's target of 3,000 new women recruits have already joined the armed forces. Some countries have reported that women already make up more than one third of their uniformed personnel.

G. Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism

69. It has been 10 years since the Security Council committed to increase its attention to women and peace and security issues in the context of terrorism, in its resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#). Since then, there has been a noticeable improvement in the visibility and importance of gender issues in the work of the United Nations bodies mandated to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism, and a growing recognition that the intention of subjugating women and erasing them from public life is part of the global nature of terrorism and is central to its tactics, narratives and ideologies. And yet, numerous challenges to gender-sensitive counter-terrorism

⁵⁴ United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

practices continue at the global, regional and national levels.⁵⁵ Many initiatives involving women are tokenistic or remain on the margins of policy and practice. At best, women are consulted, often without financial compensation for their expertise, and largely ignored. At worst, they are instrumentalized and put in danger, or become the target of counter-terrorism laws that are misused to obstruct the work of civil society activists and the victims of sweeping military interventions. For example, in May 2023, a United Nations fact-finding report concluded that at least 58 women and girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence in the village of Moura, in the Mopti region of central Mali, in March 2022, as part of a military operation led by Malian troops and foreign military personnel against an Al-Qaeda affiliated group known as Front de libération du Macina.

70. In a welcome development, two dozen Yazidis, including 21 women, received the first of their regular monthly financial stipends in March 2023, in line with the implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors, and 490 applications for compensation have been approved so far. Half of the Yazidis who were abducted by Da'esh nine years ago are still missing, however, and many of those who have been freed remain in camps for internally displaced persons, still awaiting assistance. The atrocities committed by Da'esh are among the most thoroughly investigated and documented in history, but the first conviction of a Da'esh member for genocide committed against the Yazidi did not take place until 2021 and the judgment was confirmed only in January 2023, nine years after the atrocities were committed. In Iraq, even though several members of Da'esh have been charged under counter-terrorism legislation, no cases have included charges of sexual violence (S/2023/413, para. 38).

71. Funding for gender-responsive efforts to prevent violent extremism continues to be a problem, despite the vast sums dedicated to military spending and counter-terrorism. In 2015, the Secretary-General proposed that the 15 per cent minimum funding target for gender equality as a principal objective be applied to projects addressing violent extremism. Eight years later, that minimum has not been reached.

H. Climate change and its peace and security implications

72. The impacts of climate-related risks on peace and security have distinct gendered dimensions.⁵⁶ In a significant milestone, the Security Council acknowledged this climate and peace and security nexus in the mandate of UNMISS for the first time, explicitly urging the incorporation of “gender-sensitive risk assessments on the adverse impacts of climate change” (resolution 2625 (2022)). That recognition underscores the need to bolster efforts to address the intricate relationship between climate change, gender and peace and security across peace operations and special political missions.

73. The *Thematic Review on Climate-Security and Peacebuilding*,⁵⁷ commissioned by the Peacebuilding Support Office, highlights the importance of prioritizing gender-responsive approaches in future investments for climate security and peacebuilding. The study shows the peacebuilding benefits of meaningful participation and

⁵⁵ Global survey of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions by Member States (S/2021/972, annex, para. 730). See also the global study of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council on the impact of counter-terrorism on civil society and civic space, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-terrorism/global-study-impact-counter-terrorism-measures-civil-society-and-civic-space>.

⁵⁶ See, for example, United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, practice note on “Weathering two storms: gender and climate in peace and security”, November 2022.

⁵⁷ United Nations University, Centre for Policy Research, *Thematic Review on Climate-Security and Peacebuilding*, April 2023.

leadership of women and girls in climate change adaptation, mitigation and natural resource management, and emphasizes the need to provide targeted support for women-led initiatives and organizations. In 2022, the Peacebuilding Fund invested \$12.8 million in these areas. Despite the heightened vulnerability of countries that face both climate change and conflict impacts, as well as persistent gender inequalities, including restrictions on women's land ownership and access to water and other natural resources, these crisis-affected contexts receive only a fraction of climate finance. The discrepancy is further explored in a recent climate finance study conducted by UN-Women, which includes a recommendation that a more detailed method be applied for designing gender-specific indicators and gender tagging systems in climate mitigation and adaptation finance projects.⁵⁸

74. National action plans on women and peace and security increasingly include references to climate change. At the time of writing, 43 of 107 national action plans (40 per cent) and 6 of 13 regional action plans and strategies (46 per cent) include such references. This is in line with resolution 2242 (2015), in which the Security Council, nearly a decade ago, recognized the impact of climate change in the changing global peace and security landscape. There is still untapped potential within national action plans and the women and peace and security agenda to go beyond solely narrative references and instead establish specific actions and targets, including by supporting the role of women peacebuilders in resolving conflicts linked to control of natural resources and ensuring the protection of women environmental human rights defenders.

75. Confronting the devastating consequences of the climate crisis demands immediate and decisive action. It is imperative that these actions are founded upon inclusive, sustainable and equitable strategies, particularly in regions that are already burdened by protracted crises and deep-seated inequalities. The invaluable knowledge of communities, as well as that of women peacebuilders and environmental human rights defenders who often represent the communities that are most affected by climate change and environmental catastrophes, must be harnessed and integrated into community adaptation and mitigation strategies, and to inform global policymaking. In Yemen, for example, women's groups played an important role in raising awareness about the environmental risks of FSO *Safer*, thereby contributing to the successful collective efforts to prevent a massive oil spill in the Red Sea.

IV. Action to realize women and peace and security commitments

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

76. National and regional commitments to the women and peace and security agenda have continued to grow, indicating sustained support over two decades for the agenda's normative framework and its potential for sustaining peace. Nevertheless, recent conflict trends reveal that the principles of the women and peace and security agenda have not yet been integrated by decision makers as a central strategy to prevent and resolve conflicts.

77. As of July 2023, 107 countries and territories had adopted national action plans. Chad, Morocco, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Uruguay launched their first action plans and several countries renewed expired plans. Ukraine updated and revised its national action plan in response to the Russian invasion and mandated that its subnational

⁵⁸ UN-Women, study on gender-responsiveness of climate finance for sustaining peace (forthcoming).

plans be updated accordingly. Over time, new and emerging issues have gained greater attention in these plans, including addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, climate change and cybersecurity, and examples of localization of national action plans in partnership with women peacebuilders are growing. A total of 86 per cent of national action plans had a monitoring framework with indicators, but only 26 per cent of them included a budget at the launch of the plan. Overall, a lack of comprehensive whole-of-government monitoring and reporting, along with a lack of financing to realize the goals and commitments of the national action plans, remain the biggest challenges. In some cases, such as in Libya, political actors have successfully mobilized against the adoption of a national action plan. The number of countries that have launched or announced feminist foreign policies continues to grow. New analysis⁵⁹ recognizes the potential of these policies as tools for systemic change, yet, to date, few have fully embedded feminist principles and approaches across all areas of foreign policy.

78. Regional organizations play an important role in peace and security processes and in advancing global commitments on the women and peace and security agenda. At the time of writing, 13 regional and subregional organizations have action plans and strategies to elevate the implementation of women and peace and security commitments and monitoring with member countries. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted its first regional plan of action in December 2022, which has generated momentum towards the development of national action plans in ASEAN countries and the localization of the agenda in the region.

79. The Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network⁶⁰ for Member States and regional organizations, which has grown to 100 members, held its fifth capital-level meeting in June 2023 in Washington, D.C. In a joint meeting communiqué, members condemned the rollback of women's and girls' human rights across the world. Members also highlighted the critical role of parliamentarians and legislators in the promotion of monitoring and reporting across government and of adequate financing for national action plans, policies and initiatives.

80. The multi-stakeholder Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action⁶¹ had reached 204 signatories by July 2023 and is tracking over 1,200 advocacy, financing, policy and programmatic actions in 156 countries and territories, 15 of which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) considers to be extremely fragile. UN-Women published the first Compact accountability report in September 2023, highlighting progress made by signatories on implementation against global commitments on financing, women's participation in peace processes, women's economic security and women's leadership, and on protecting and promoting women's human rights.

81. International human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions, processes and treaty bodies also play a key role. Among 44 conflict-affected countries with data, 33 had national human rights institutions fully or partially compliant with the Paris Principles. In 2022, several States reported and received recommendations on implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the context of the universal periodic review. 2023 marks the 10-year anniversary 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. Over the past decade, the Committee has used general recommendation No. 30 to inform its concluding observations regarding States

⁵⁹ See <https://www.icrw.org/publications/feminist-foreign-policy-index-a-qualitative-evaluation-of-feminist-commitments/>.

⁶⁰ See <https://wpsfocalpointnetwork.org/>.

⁶¹ See www.wpscompact.org.

Parties under review. Human rights investigations mandated by the Human Rights Council continue to play a critical role in documenting sexual and gender-based violence, increasingly applying an intersectional lens. In 2023, reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, and the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya included detailed findings of sexual and gender-based violence committed against people on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations

82. The implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is a priority for the United Nations as emphasized in the policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace⁶² launched on 20 July 2023. In the document, the Secretary-General puts forward a unifying narrative about the current state of global peace and security and proposes a comprehensive set of recommendations ranging from nuclear disarmament and preventive diplomacy to intergovernmental reform, and ideas to transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security. He affirms that we must dismantle the patriarchy and oppressive power structures which stand in the way of progress on gender equality or women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life. It builds on previous commitments, such as the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, which calls for the prioritization of the full and meaningful participation of women in all areas of conflict prevention and resolution, including in formal peace agreements.

83. The Organization is making progress on the 2019 directives on women and peace and security (S/2019/800). The Secretary-General recently reminded his senior leaders, including Heads of Mission and Resident Coordinators, of their obligations in this regard. Several entities strengthened their messaging on women and peace and security, including in the exercise of good offices, political advocacy and strategic communications. The work and voices of women peacebuilders were elevated through a range of creative means such as podcasts, editorials, storytelling, exhibitions and social media messaging, which were amplified by senior leadership. In June 2023, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect launched a "Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and related Atrocity Crimes".⁶³ In Kosovo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) participated in a mass demonstration to call attention to a series of brutal femicides. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) appealed to the National Assembly to reform the electoral law and enable improved representation of women in upcoming elections. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has prioritized gender equality not just in public statements, but also in bilateral engagements with key interlocutors, including government leaders, de facto authorities, non-State armed groups and other decision makers in

⁶² A/77/CRP.1/Add.8.

⁶³ United Nations, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, "A Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and related Atrocity Crimes", 14 July 2022. Available at https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Napoli_women_Communities_Plan_Action_August_2023.pdf.

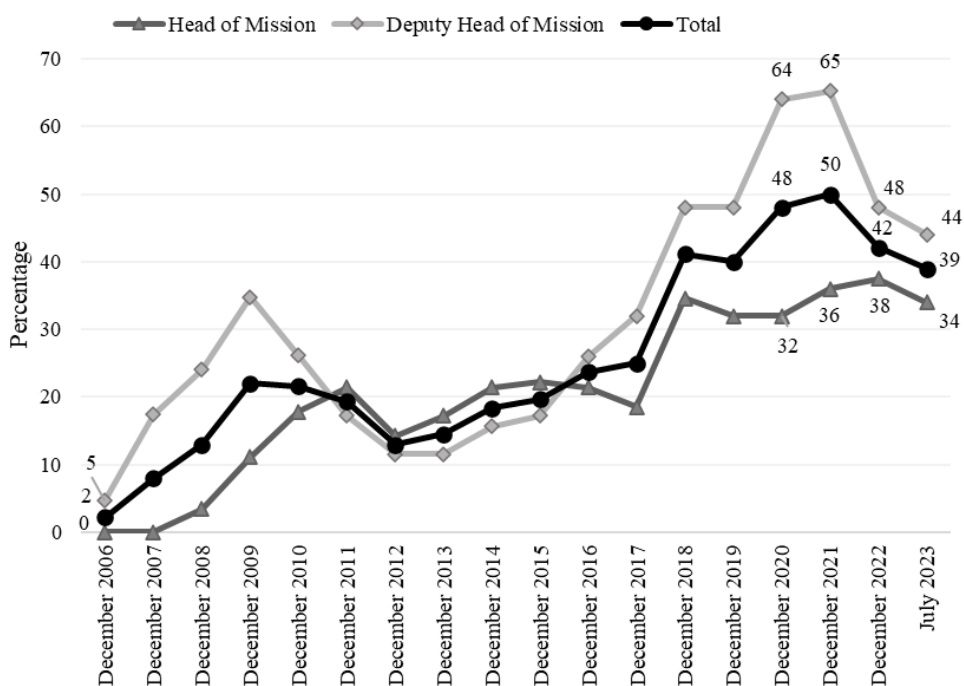
humanitarian contexts, as well as in statements by principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

84. Efforts continued to strengthen the quality and coherence of gender-responsive political and conflict analysis and needs assessments employed by the United Nations. The revised United Nations Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning now requires that dedicated gender expertise be engaged in all mechanisms and at all stages of assessments. Humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans demonstrated strengthened gender analysis and uptake of inclusion of data disaggregated by sex and age, leading to improvements in gender-responsive humanitarian planning; for example, 85 per cent of humanitarian needs overviews included such analysis in 2021, compared with 55 per cent in 2020. The new monitoring framework for the Action for Peacekeeping initiative integrates indicators that track whether mission planning frameworks are informed by gender analysis and context-specific priorities with respect to women and peace and security, and the framework also serves to monitor women's participation in early warning and formal mechanisms supported by missions. UNDP has developed a 10-point action agenda for advancing gender equality in crisis settings.

85. The United Nations remains fully committed to reaching and maintaining gender parity goals across the system as part of efforts to lead by example. While gender parity was nearly achieved when the representation of women among Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission reached 48 per cent in June 2021, leadership changes over the two-year period to June 2023 resulted in a decrease, to 38 per cent. As of July 2023, 39 per cent of such posts were encumbered by women, with more women in deputy positions (see figure VI). With regard to Heads of Mission, the number was lower in peacekeeping operations (29 per cent), where there are four military-led missions, all led by men, compared with special political missions, where 43 per cent of mission leadership posts are encumbered by women. Given that very few women globally are in military leadership positions at the level required for such appointments to peacekeeping operations, progress with respect to women serving as military Heads of Mission will depend on Member States nominating women for these positions. Among the 21 independent reviews mandated by the Security Council since 2017 to assess United Nations field operations, only two have been led by women.⁶⁴ In order to reach gender parity at the highest levels of the United Nations, efforts will continue to implement the strategies outlined in the system-wide strategy on gender parity.

⁶⁴ Based on updated calculations in Daniel Forti, *Independent Reviews of UN Peace Operations: A Study of Politics and Practice*, International Peace Institute, October 2021.

Figure VI
Representation of women in United Nations mission leadership as a percentage of total posts, 2006–July 2023



Source: Leadership Support Section, Department of Peace Operations and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (August 2023).

Note: Data also include other Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-led special political missions headed by envoys or special representatives. Since September 2022, data have been calculated on the basis of encumbered posts, not including designates.

86. In 2022, of the 12 peacekeeping missions, 8 had gender units,⁶⁵ with a total of 44 gender advisers or gender affairs officers, 14 police gender advisers, and 33 had appointed military gender advisers. Four larger multidimensional missions were staffed with senior gender advisers (P-5). Six⁶⁶ of the heads of the gender units continued to report directly to the Head of Mission. The strategic placement of gender units and direct reporting lines to Heads of Mission remain central to enabling the strategic consideration of women and peace and security issues and priorities in planning processes, political strategies, monitoring and reporting. There are also 31 full-time gender advisers across 20 special political missions.⁶⁷ Six special political missions had senior gender advisers (P-5) throughout 2022,⁶⁸ one less than in 2021. The four special political missions that did not have any gender advisers, women's

⁶⁵ UNMISS, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), UNISFA, UNIFIL, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

⁶⁶ MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNMIK, UNFICYP, UNIFIL.

⁶⁷ The gender adviser in Cyprus is deployed with the peacekeeping mission but also advises the good offices. The gender adviser for the United Nations Office to the African Union also advises the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

⁶⁸ United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and United Nations Mission to Support the Hedaydah Agreement (UNMHA).

protection advisers or human rights advisers⁶⁹ were supported through gender focal points. In his latest report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2023/413), the Secretary-General emphasized the need to expand deployments of women's protection advisers, including in transition settings.

87. Gender expertise in conflict and crisis settings was also provided through other entities and mechanisms. Through its regional and country presence, UN-Women supported the implementation of women and peace and security initiatives in some 70 countries and contributed to gender-responsive conflict analysis and rapid gender assessments in conflict and humanitarian settings. In its new role as member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UN-Women is leading the update of the Committee's gender policy. In 2022, UN-Women supported 1,328 local women's organizations so as to allow them to participate meaningfully in humanitarian planning processes, improve gender-equitable outcomes and increase access to critical humanitarian services among crisis-affected women and girls. Through the Gender Standby Capacity Project of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 23 senior gender advisers were deployed in 2022 to strengthen gender equality in humanitarian responses. Gender and humanitarian action working groups contributed to the work of 13 humanitarian country teams. While 65 per cent of humanitarian country teams reported having consulted with at least one local women's rights organization in 2021, 85 per cent of them did so in contexts where gender working groups were active.

88. The United Nations has strengthened its monitoring and accountability framework on women and peace and security. Alongside tracking trends on global indicators in conflict and crisis settings, the framework will monitor system-wide efforts to realize commitments under the agenda and capture related outcomes by entities. The Secretary-General reiterates the need to close gender data gaps and elevate the availability, use and visibility of data and communications on women and peace and security.

C. Financing for the women and peace and security agenda

89. Available data continue to reveal striking gaps in investment and financing, one example of which is the lack of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The shocking and constant rise in humanitarian needs and requirements is another example. At the beginning of 2023, \$51.5 billion was the funding required to respond to humanitarian crises globally, a 25 per cent increase compared with the beginning of 2022. Since then, needs have further increased. Appeals have been less than half-funded for the past two years and there is significant imbalance in where the money goes. For instance, the funding received for response plans for gender-based violence was only 20 per cent in 2022.⁷⁰

90. Bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts,⁷¹ stood at \$48.7 billion in 2021. Of that amount, \$20.4 billion (43 per cent) was committed to support gender equality (see figure VII). This marks a decrease in the percentage committed for gender equality, compared with an overall rising trend over the last decade, and only

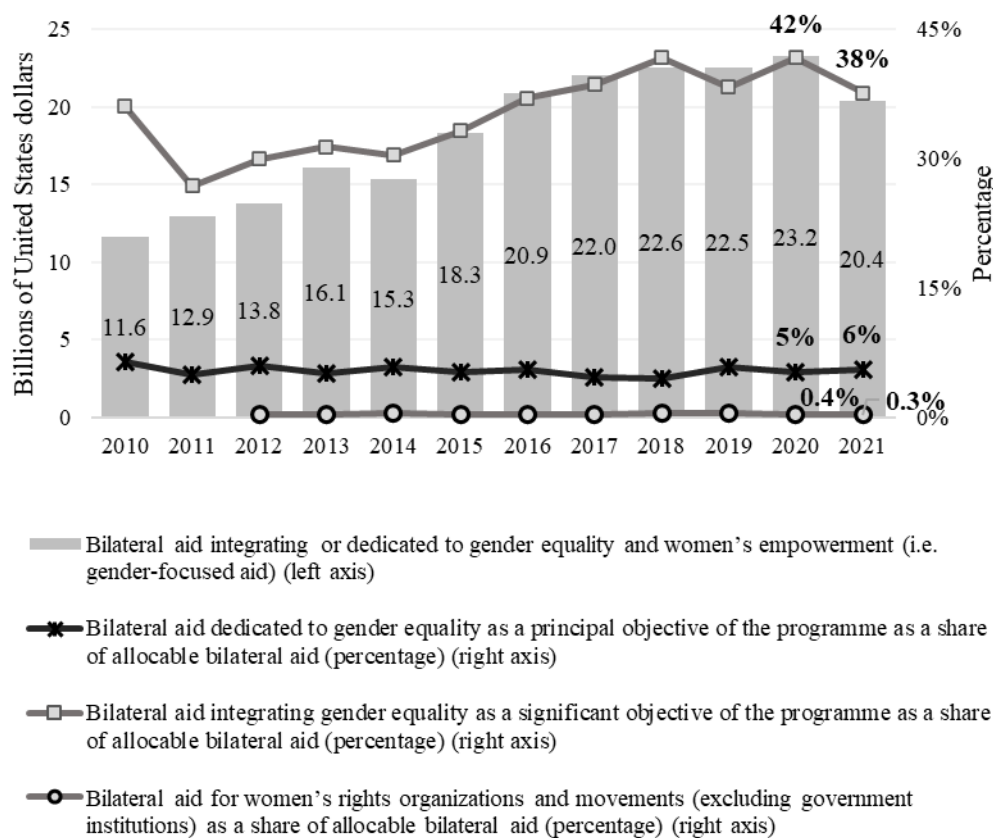
⁶⁹ Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and UNMHA.

⁷⁰ See <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2022>, accessed July 2023.

⁷¹ For the purposes of the statistics in para. 90 and figure VII, conflict-affected contexts includes countries identified as "fragile" according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

\$2.6 billion (6 per cent) was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective, indicating that progress had plateaued despite calls for moving towards and exceeding targets such as the United Nations minimum target of 15 per cent. Similarly, bilateral aid supporting feminist, women-led and women’s rights organizations and movements in conflict-affected countries and those identified as “fragile” according to OECD remained at a low level of \$148 million (0.3 per cent of bilateral aid) in 2021, a decrease from \$176 million in 2020. Greater efforts are needed to develop authentic partnerships for peace with local civil society organizations and peacebuilders grounded in a solid understanding of the challenging realities in which many operate. Alongside dedicated efforts to significantly scale up support, this may also require efforts to address and revise eligibility criteria and simplify application and reporting procedures.

Figure VII
Bilateral aid in support of gender equality and women’s rights in conflict-affected contexts, 2010–2021



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System database, accessed 6 June 2023.

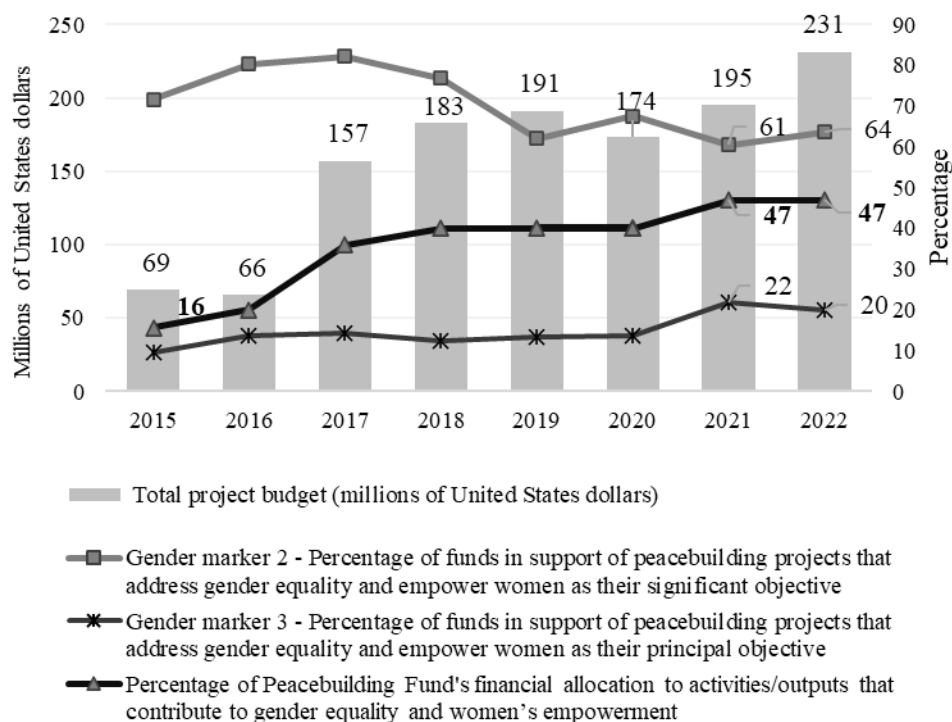
91. Recognizing the importance of allocating the requisite funds for gender equality, the Finance and Budget Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination adopted the gender equality marker standard in November 2022. The standard introduces a common methodology and format for tracking the contribution of United Nations activities to gender equality and women’s empowerment. Entities are given a three-year transition period during which to adapt

their systems. The standard will cover United Nations system entities and country teams and inter-agency pooled funds.

92. At the time of writing, 23 entities are using some form of the gender equality marker in conjunction with financial targets to define adequate investments on gender equality. In 2022, four entities (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of Counter-Terrorism) established a 15 per cent minimum financial target dedicated for gender equality, while others maintained tailored targets. For instance, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to exceed its minimum 17 per cent target applied to its multi-year appeal projects. The number of United Nations country teams applying the gender equality marker increased to 91, from 79 in 2022. In 2022, 25 country teams with a joint workplan allocated 15 per cent or more of the available resources under the country team annual funding framework to activities with gender equality as a principal objective. Continuous efforts are needed to build the capacity of personnel at headquarters and in the field, as well as partners, in terms of application of the gender equality marker and monitoring and reporting on financial allocation and expenditure across thematic areas and settings.

93. As peacebuilding needs continue to increase, the demand for support from the Peacebuilding Fund has grown. Without a commensurate increase in contributions, however, there will be a decrease in the level of financing for peace. In 2022, the Fund approved a record \$231 million in support for peacebuilding initiatives in 37 countries, of which 47 per cent (\$108.5 million) was focused on supporting gender equality. While the proportion dedicated to gender equality is plateauing, it continued to exceed both the Fund's 15 per cent and 30 per cent financing targets for gender equality (see figure VIII). In 2022, the Fund's gender and youth promotion initiatives allocated \$46.7 million for 27 projects across 21 countries, compared with \$51.5 million in 2021. With the benefit of the thematic reviews on local peacebuilding and on gender-responsive peacebuilding, the Fund launched a pilot to decentralize the gender promotion initiative in the Gambia, Guatemala, Haiti and the Niger, investing \$2.5 million in each country to encourage national ownership over the selection of proposals while expanding funding access to national and local women-led civil society organizations. The Fund's application and monitoring of the gender equality marker remains a model for other funds.

Figure VIII
Peacebuilding Fund allocations to projects promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, 2015–2022



Source: Data from the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (April 2023).

Note: The financial allocation of 47 per cent in support of gender equality in 2022 (blue line with triangles) was tracked at the output or activity level, instead of at the project level. The percentage is calculated as the sum of financial allocations to projects with gender equality as a principal objective (i.e. gender marker 3 projects) and the allocations within gender marker 2 and gender marker 1 projects that contribute to gender equality.

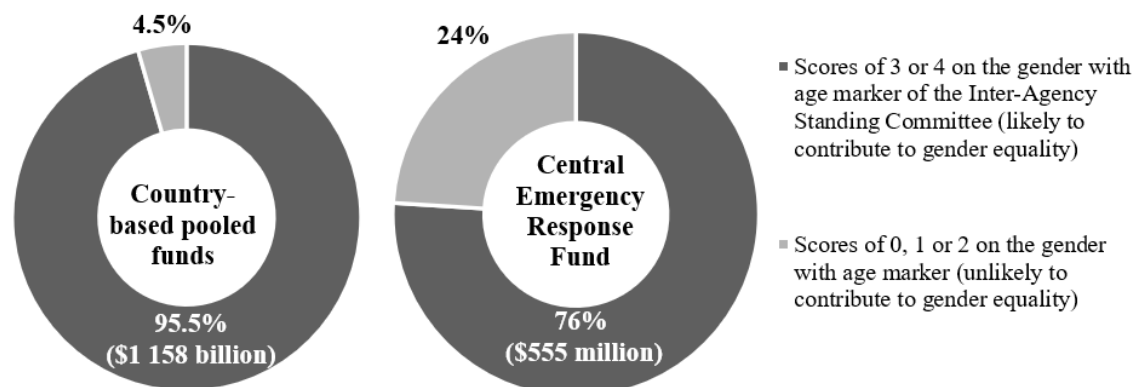
94. The high-level Meeting on financing for peacebuilding held in April 2022 was a milestone in Member States' commitment towards increased, more predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding. It resulted in the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution [76/305](#), in which the Assembly recognized the continued underfunding of peacebuilding and outlining follow-up actions, which include urging efforts to fund initiatives that integrate women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the planning, implementation and reporting of peacebuilding programming. The Assembly also encouraged other funding mechanisms to increase their percentage of peacebuilding funding dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

95. All funding proposals in the framework of the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds require a gender analysis and data disaggregated by sex, along with the use of the gender with age marker of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. In 2022, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated a record \$555 million (76 per cent) to projects aimed at contributing to gender equality (see figure IX). Country-based pooled funds allocated \$1.158 billion (95.5 per cent) to projects with strong gender mainstreaming components, covering 20 country operations. Nearly three quarters of the projects funded by country-based

pooled funds were rated as demonstrating consideration of gender, age and disability in the proposed interventions and outcomes for targeted community members.

Figure IX

Distribution of funding from country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated to programmes or projects that contribute to gender equality, as measured by the gender with age marker, 2022



Source: Data on the gender with age marker from the country-based pooled funds database, available at https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/#gam_heading; annual results report of the Central Emergency Response Fund for 2022.

96. There have been repeated calls to make long-term, flexible and core funding available to local women’s rights and women-led organizations as part of a strategy to build peace, stability and social cohesion. Nevertheless, progress in moving away from project-based and short-term funding has been sluggish. UN-Women, through its regional and country offices, continued to advocate that funding be flexible and unearmarked, where possible, in order to work alongside women civil society organizations, and to be able to partner with them to co-design agile and responsive initiatives that address the needs of women as contexts rapidly evolve.

97. Mechanisms such as the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund are leading the way in demonstrating the benefits of taking a different approach. In 2022 alone, the Fund raised over \$43.8 million, the highest annual amount since the Fund was launched in 2016. Since its establishment, the Fund has supported over 1,000 local women’s civil society organizations in 46 crisis and conflict-affected countries, including 98 organizations with critical institutional funding to safeguard their existence, strengthen their capacities and adapt to evolving challenges. Almost half of the Fund’s partners received funding through the United Nations for the first time. For example, over the past year, the Fund has supported 43 civil society organizations in Ukraine and Moldova, allocating \$9.7 million to respond to the crisis caused by the invasion of Ukraine.

98. On 8 March 2023, the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund launched “Invest-In-Women”, a global campaign calling upon governments and other donors around the world to support the transformational impact of local women’s organizations in the face of increasingly complex crises. The campaign, which is endorsed by the Secretary-General, aims to mobilize \$300 million in new financing by the end of 2025 for 3,500 local women’s organizations.

99. In 2024, the report of the Secretary-General will have a special emphasis on the financing of the women and peace and security agenda, in follow-up to the Secretary-General’s forward-looking goals for the decade leading up to 2030. It will offer an

opportunity to undertake deeper analysis to understand and address financing gaps, accelerate the implementation of tools such as gender markers and gender audits and significantly scale up financing in support of women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society organizations at the frontlines of conflict and crisis.

V. Work of the Security Council

100. In 2022, a majority of the countries holding the monthly rotating presidency of the Security Council signed a declaration of shared commitments on women and peace and security, an initiative that has been signed by 16 different Council members since September 2021.⁷² That initiative contributed to increased visibility of the women and peace and security agenda, as reflected in the five open debates held on the agenda item in 2022 and the high percentage of women briefing the Security Council, both establishing a new record. In 2022, 46 per cent of the people invited to speak to the Security Council under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure were women, compared with 19 per cent on average between 2013 and 2017, and even lower numbers in earlier years. Speakers included 56 women representing civil society, the second highest number ever, and a significant increase in the number of women representing the United Nations. In contrast, women's underrepresentation among regional organizations invited to speak to the Security Council was more pronounced than in 2021, reaching only 17 per cent.

101. The percentage of decisions of the Security Council that included references to women or gender equality dropped to 62.3 per cent, almost seven points lower than in 2021. While the gender balance of the panels of experts relating to sanctions regimes continues to improve – with women now making up 39.3 per cent of experts, compared with 19 per cent in 2016⁷³ – and while the reports of the relevant monitoring teams often include important information about atrocities perpetrated against women and girls, very few individuals or entities are then sanctioned as a result, even in cases where they are also listed repeatedly in the annex to the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. With the support of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, the sanctions committees could take steps to further advance the women and peace and security agenda, including by resuming regular briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Informal Expert Group continued to contribute to the quality and availability of gender analysis through nine meetings and its first-ever field visit, as well as advocacy initiatives by the Co-Chairs following these meetings, such as encouraging the Government of Colombia to increase women's representation in the negotiations with ELN.

102. Some examples of the Security Council's actions include repeated condemnations of the Taliban's restrictions of women's rights, including through the adoption of resolution 2681 (2023), co-sponsored by more than 90 countries, in April 2023; the adoption of stronger measures to address the increase in the number of incidents sexual violence perpetrated by armed gangs in Haiti, such as the mandated deployment of a women's protection adviser, and the establishment of a sanctions regime with sexual violence as a stand-alone criterion for listing (resolutions 2645 (2022) and 2653 (2022)); the first-ever mention of women in the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on

⁷² Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Malta, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. For more details on the origins of this initiative, see S/2022/91.

⁷³ See <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/highlights-2022>.

non-proliferation (resolution [2663 \(2022\)](#)); and stronger language on protecting women who defend human rights from reprisals, as well as more attention being paid by Council members to preventing reprisals against women briefers from civil society who are invited to provide briefings, or to addressing such reprisals, when they occur. UN-Women launched a survey to collect information about reprisals against these civil society briefers in order to improve the reporting and documentation of such cases. In 2022, the survey was sent to 56 women who briefed the Council that year, 24 of whom responded, with 7 who self-reported having been targeted as a consequence to their briefing. Three cases reported through the survey are included in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, two of them having been included anonymously owing to the fear of further reprisals ([A/HRC/54/61](#), para. 13).

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

103. The present report placed a special emphasis on the goal of achieving a radical shift and tangible results in women's meaningful participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It details how the deteriorating global security context and related negative trends are setting back both gender equality and global peace, making the need for investment into realizing commitments even more pressing. It sets out findings that no substantial progress has been made in increasing funding for women's organizations or the percentage of women in peace negotiations, and while – in follow-up to the previous report – there is greater attention to the threats and violence faced by women human rights defenders, such violence remains on the rise. In this context, standing up for gender equality and women's human rights is more important than ever. More than two decades into the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in building and sustaining peace should be the norm, and not an afterthought.

104. I recently reaffirmed my set of directives on women and peace and security for United Nations system entities, which I initially issued in 2019, and will continue to monitor progress carefully. In addition, the United Nations commits to advocating and supporting an initial minimum target that one third of participants in mediation and peace processes be women, while continuing to aim for an increase towards parity in political and electoral processes, among other recommendations.

105. The transformative potential of any of these measures will be blunted, however, unless Member States and other international organizations also use their political and financial capital and their level of influence to advance the women and peace and security agenda. We know that gender equality multiplies and accelerates the drivers of human progress, economic growth, sustainable development and peace. It is therefore of grave concern that halfway to the end point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, data show that the world is failing to achieve gender equality.⁷⁴ Not a single conflict-affected country is on track to achieve the Goals relating to hunger, health or gender equality. The following recommendations are meant to encourage action by Member States ahead of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), in the light of recent trends and developments:

(a) Member States that support mediation could set ambitious and measurable targets with respect to fostering women's direct participation in delegations and negotiating teams in line with international norms and standards; nominate and

⁷⁴ (UN-Women), "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the gender snapshot 2023", p. 12.

appoint women as lead mediators and as mediation experts and set gender balance and the inclusion of gender expertise as a norm for their own mediation teams; earmark a minimum 15 per cent of funds allocated for mediation support to promoting women's participation; track and report publicly and in real time on the number and percentage of women directly participating in peace processes; and ensure that gender equality and women's human rights are a central part of peace agreements;

(b) Support innovative programming to invest in women's participation and leadership in local conflict resolution, including local ceasefires, humanitarian access, early warning mechanisms, prisoner exchanges, and natural resource management in conflict-affected settings;

(c) Contribute to United Nations efforts to raise \$300 million in new funding pledges for women's organizations in crisis settings over the next three years, including through supporting the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund;

(d) Ensure that national action plans on women and peace and security are budgeted and consider their codification into national legislation, or adopt legislation on specific elements of the agenda, such as multisectoral services for responding to gender-based violence, reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, gender persecution and refugee and asylum rights, or support for sexual and reproductive health and rights in conflict-affected settings;

(e) Allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) to gender equality, including a minimum of 1 per cent of ODA to women's organizations, especially grass-roots groups mobilizing for peace;

(f) Increase support to elevate the voices of women from diverse backgrounds, including young women, women with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, Indigenous women, and others, and make accommodations, as needed, to model inclusive processes and practices across all peace and security efforts;

(g) Support the full range of women's human rights and champion the mutually reinforcing relationship between women's participation and women's human rights; acknowledging that failure to promote and protect the full spectrum of women's human rights, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, has a measurable impact on women's ability to participate in public life;

(h) Take additional measures to support women human rights defenders in undertaking their work in a safe and sustainable manner, facilitate the evacuation and relocation of women human rights defenders at immediate risk, and set out strategies for long-term support to them in exile;

(i) Consider greater use of conditions, incentives and accountability tools, including sanctions, international criminal proceedings, divestment campaigns or the application of universal jurisdiction, so as to strengthen the protection of women in conflict-affected countries;

(j) Demonstrate commitment to gender equality, women's rights and the global norm of gender parity in political representation, through greater use of temporary special measures for women in conflict-affected settings, including to facilitate equitable access to public financing for campaigns and reinforce mechanisms to prevent violence against women in politics;

(k) Reduce military expenditures and ensure compliance with international norms and frameworks such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons;

(l) Allocate a fixed proportion of the defence budget to supporting gender-responsive security sector reform and mandate national security institutions to report on women's status and proportion in these institutions so as to enable global data collection on this matter, assess barriers to women's representation, put in place gender-responsive policies, recruitment strategies, career development initiatives and temporary special measures, and ensure that discussions and decision-making on the responsible use of new technologies in the security sector take into account gender considerations;

(m) Call for all contributions to post-conflict reconstruction and recovery and advice on post-conflict macroeconomic policies to take into account gender equality and prioritize public expenditure on vital services for women, and for these investments to be clearly reported and shared with the international community in relevant forums;

(n) Ensure the availability of predictable resources to gender equality and women and peace and security programming and expertise during peacekeeping mission drawdowns and transitions, in order to avert crises and gaps arising from mission closure and consolidate gains;

(o) Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence, including gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technologies, and engage social media platforms and social media monitoring entities to combat the spread of gender-based hate speech and disinformation, in partnership with women's and feminist organizations.
