



VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (SDGs) – SUBMISSION

Introduction:

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally.

Our vision is a world in which gender equality, and the contributions and rights of diverse women and girls, are at the forefront of transforming conflict to build peace.

Contributions to the achievement of the SDGs:

The Coalition, through its advocacy and advisory work, is aiming to ensure that the Australian Government's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals recognises the importance of women, peace and security across the 17 goals and explicitly makes the link between Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

We are focussed on reshaping the peace and security dialogue, policy and practice in Australia and our region away from an increasingly militarised and securitised approach towards a transformative women, peace and security agenda – focussed on sustainable development and human security.

As a Coalition, we work to harness the collective power of women's movements and peace movements towards our vision in Australia, our region and globally. The SDGs provide a key moment for this collective action, linking the work of domestic organisations and those with an international focus within Australia with regional and global women, peace and security networks.

The Coalition plays a crucial role in tracking Government progress against the current National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS through an annual dialogue and the production of a civil society report card (see reference list). The Coalition is currently focussed on ensuring that the next NAP on WPS references and aligns with the SDGs and, in particular, makes the connection between Goal 5 and Goal 16. We are also undertaking community-based consultations to increase awareness around women, peace and security and to bring community-led definitions of peace and security into policy spaces such as the NAP development (see case study below).

Case Study: Bringing the voices of diverse women to Australia's peace and security approaches

As Australia nears the end of its current National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2018) and look towards the development of the next iteration of the NAP, the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security is focussed on amplifying the voices of diverse women in Australia and our region to inform policy development. In September 2017, the Coalition organised a series of roundtables in each Australian capital city, with the support of the Australian Government, to provide a space for women to discuss what peace and security means in practice. These community-based discussions demonstrated the importance of adopting a human security approach to the implementation of Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and the importance of gender equality for achieving sustainable peace.

The roundtables engaged both individuals and organisations working domestically as well as those with an international focus, aligning with the aims of the SDGs to create these connections. A Talanoa discussion was also held at the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women with Pacific feminists and women's human rights defenders coming together to voice their concerns, priorities and ideas for

Australia's WPS agenda in the Pacific region. Discussions will be collated into a summary report, *Women Shape the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, and this will be used as the basis for discussions between civil society and the Australian government at a Policy Dialogue in November 2017.

The outcomes of the discussions demonstrate the importance of developing approaches to Goal 16 which take into account community-led definitions of peace and security in Australia and our region, and which acknowledge the importance of women's leadership and participation in women, peace and security policy and practice.

Note: Photos from the roundtables available upon request.

Recent successes, challenges and potential for action by the Australian Government on women, peace and security:

Successes:

- In 2012, the Australian Government in 2012 launched the inaugural Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2012 - 2018 ('NAP').¹
- The support by the Australian-Civil Military Centre for the Annual Civil Society Dialogue each year makes an important contribution to facilitating civil society and Government engagement on women, peace and security policy and practice.
- The Independent Interim Review (2016) assesses Government progress on WPS (see page 17-18 of this report for an outline of identified successes).²

Challenges:

- In practice, Australia's approach to WPS has been to focus primarily on the protection of women in conflict or the recruitment of women to defence and police forces. Yet we know women's leadership and substantive participation in all stages of the peace process is essential for sustainable peace. A reframing of the current approach towards resourcing and expanding the leadership of local women in peace building and conflict mediation is critical.
- Limitations in the current monitoring and evaluation of the NAP such as the absence of specific targets and goals, a baseline or outcome statements.
- Uneven progress and resource allocation across implementing agencies of the NAP.
- Limited resourcing for sustained ongoing civil society engagement with the Government on WPS.
- Lack of a whole of government implementation plan and resourcing to facilitate coordination across government.

Potential for action:

- The Australian Government can be a leader in ensuring that the women, peace and security agenda is at the centre of efforts to support Goal 16 and that connections are made between Goal 5 and Goal 16. Efforts towards Goal 16 targets must go hand-in-hand with Goal 5 targets given the focus on significantly reducing all forms of violence, ensuring inclusive and representative decision-making and effective national institutions.
- The next iteration of Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2019 presents an opportunity for Australia to expand its focus from protection to prevention, prioritising the full and effective participation of women in the maintenance of peace and security and conflict prevention.
- Australia's approach to the SDGs should promote stability in the region, which focusses on conflict prevention and the human dimensions of security. Addressing gender inequality and promoting women's human rights must be central to this preventative approach.

¹ Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/government-international/australian-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2012-2018>

² Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2015), *Independent Review of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018*, available at: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/nap-interim-review-report.pdf>

- The next iteration of the NAP should reference and integrate the SDGs and align with Cross-Government mechanisms to implement and measure the SDGs.³
- Similarly, mechanisms to ensure a whole of government approach on women, peace and security, such as the Inter-Departmental Working Group on women, peace and security, can also be utilised to drive action on Goal 16.
- There is also a role for the Australian Government to play in cooperating with other countries in the region through exchanging lessons learnt, good practice and research findings in relation to the implementation of the WPS Agenda including NAPs.
- The Australian Government should draw on existing knowledge and frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, the Beijing Platform for Action, and UNSCR 1325 global indicators to implement and track progress against Goal 16.

Reports and References:

WPS Coalition (2017) Submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper: Practical and effective integration of a gender equality perspective and Women, Peace and Security (WPS), available at:

<https://wpscoalition.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/wpscoalition-fp-wp.pdf>

2016 Fourth Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2017), available at: <https://wpscoalition.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/fourth-annual-civil-society-report-card-on-the-national-action-plan-for-women-peace-and-security.pdf>

2015 Third Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2016), available at: <https://wpscoalition.org/category/2015/2015-report-card/>

2014 Second Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015), available at: <https://wpscoalition.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/second-annual-civil-society-report-card-australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security.pdf>

2013 Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, (2014), available at: <https://wpscoalition.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/civil-society-report-card-2013-final-lores.pdf>

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2015), *Independent Review of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018*, available at:

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/nap-interim-review-report.pdf>

UN Women (2015) Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, available at:

http://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/en/GlobalStudy_EN_Web.pdf

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³ Note the 3rd National Action Plans of Sweden and Netherlands reference the 2030 Agenda.