

Statement

German government treading on dangerous ground in the UN Security Council

Planned new resolution threatens to weaken the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda

Berlin, March 7, 2019

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Germany will be helping to shape international security policy in the years 2019 – 2020. Against this backdrop, the German government has declared the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda to be one of the focal points of its work. It is envisaged that Germany's presidency of the UN Security Council in April 2019 will be devoted to the struggle against sexualised violence during conflicts. One of the German government's declared aims is to introduce a further resolution in the UN body with its stated objective of plugging the «normative gaps» and thus affording women and girls greater protection from violence.

The undersigning organisations expressly welcome the fact that Germany is addressing this core issue. However, a source of concern to us is the initiative to adopt a further resolution. Given the further hardening of anti-democratic and decidedly misogynistic stances in the UN Security Council, we believe there is a danger of a weak resolution text ultimately being negotiated and adopted. Some powerful members of the Security Council, such as Russia, China and the USA, are undermining women's rights and once again questioning, for example, women's and girls' right to self-determination. Through such actions, the achievements that have already been made

could be shattered and the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda overall decisively weakened.

Should these fears be confirmed during the pre-negotiation stage, Germany must not be allowed to introduce the resolution in the Security Council.

Women and girls suffer particularly heavily where conflicts arise. Gender-based inequalities grow during crises. Large numbers of women and girls fall victim to sexualised violence and lose the opportunity to secure their livelihood. It is not uncommon for the injustice done to them to go unrecognised. They are socially stigmatised and ostracised. These violent experiences can carry through to the next generation as a trans-generational trauma and destabilise post-war societies.

In the year 2000, the UN Security Council therefore adopted its ground-breaking Resolution 1325. The members at that time unanimously affirmed that women and girls should be better protected from sexualised violence during conflicts and that they should be actively involved in peace processes. In seven subsequent resolutions on the issue of «Women, Peace and Security», the three pillars of Resolution 1325 – Prevention, Protection and Participation – were

further specified. Despite this, even today, almost 20 years on, grave problems exist in implementing the jointly concluded agreements. Adopting new normative resolutions does not resolve the issue of sluggish implementation.

We therefore urge¹ Germany to use its time in the UN Security Council

- to shift the focus to conflict-prevention and peace-building measures. In this context, human rights violations and structural inequalities should be addressed in particular. It is essential that the ongoing global militarisation be stopped. Instead, the concept of «Human Security» must be strengthened. This imperatively involves greater arms export controls and combatting illegal arms trading.
- to make the hearing of women's rights defenders and activists as experts a mandatory duty and their conflict analyses and strategies for political solutions taken on board. Germany needs to use side events or briefings for these Security Council debates to invite representatives of the civil societies concerned so that the interests of women and girls are heard and directly incorporated into the discussions and decisions of the Security Council.
- to anchor the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda in the resolutions of the Security Council. This includes all resolutions on country contexts, peacekeeping missions as well as issue-based resolutions. In this context, the extent to which structural inequalities render women and girls particularly vulnerable should especially be examined. Forms of discrimination that prevent women and girls from (adequately) exercising their rights must be systematically overcome.
- to, once and for all, systematically take into account the continuum of gender-based violence in patriarchal societies. In previous years, the Security Council has discussed the issue of sexualised violence in armed conflicts primarily in the context of a strategic means of warfare. This neither reflects the realities on the ground nor does it do justice to the needs and rights

of the survivors. Women and girls experience numerous forms of sexualised and gender-based violence before, during and after armed conflicts. Not all of these forms of violence have been attributed to military strategies. Germany should therefore move the debate on to a transformative approach towards combating sexualised violence in armed conflicts.

- to pursue an intersectional approach that also covers the perspectives and needs of groups of multiple discrimination, such as women and girls with impairments, black people and people of colour, refugee women or LGBTQI people.
- to advance the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 et seqq. in harmony with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This would enable, among other things, sanctions to be levied for non-implementation.
- The implementation of the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda by the Security Council as well as the United Nations in general must involve earmarking adequate financial and human resources. At present, this policy area is being hit by cuts.

Germany now has an opportunity to shape international peace policy.

Membership of the UN Security Council opens the door for foreign policy to be aligned to human rights issues and a peace agenda as well as to offer women and girls in particular effective protection and include them as activists and experts. Women must no longer be viewed merely as victims and survivors. Instead, they should be included in humanitarian aid and peace negotiation processes as policy shapers. This especially also applies to representatives at the grass-roots level. It is therefore not solely a matter of raising the quota for women but of systematically integrating the expertise of activists. Germany must therefore take great pains to emphasise that part of Resolution 1325 which cites the role of women and girls as actors in conflict management and partners in peace talks.

Given the immense human rights violations and concerted attacks from the right on the (sexual) self-determination of women and girls, the swift and structural implementation of UN Resolution 1325 et. seqq. in all areas is a matter of urgency.

As representatives of civil society, we call on the German government to walk the talk and campaign forcefully in the Security Council for the rights of women and girls.

¹ Cf. Policy Briefing: For a Foreign Policy Based on Human Rights and Gender Equality. Need for action on the implementation of the «Women, Peace and Security» agenda at: https://www.medicamondiale.org/fileadmin/redaktion/5_Service/Mediathek/Dokumente/Deutsch/Positionspapiere_offene-Briefe/Policy-Briefing-Menschenrechte_Geschlechtergerechtigkeit-2018_CR-medica-mondiale_etaltri.pdf

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