



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

www.afgw.org.au

The Australian Federation of Graduate Women (formerly AFUW, the Australian Federation of University Women) congratulates the Government on its commitment to proceed with a National Action Plan designed to achieve the aims of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 and subsequent related SCR Resolutions. The Australian Federation, membership of which is open to all women graduates of a recognized Higher Education institution, is one of some 70 national Associations affiliated with the International Federation of University Women. Both the Australian and the international bodies have policy Resolutions urging members to advocate in support of these Resolutions (See Attachment A). Accordingly, as AFUW, we participated in the 2009 consultation project on a National Action Plan and have in the past written independently to the Government about the need for Australia to proceed with an NAP (See Attachment B).

We are particularly pleased to see that the Draft Plan considers ways to meet the requirements not only of Resolution 1325, but also of the related Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960, as it is only consideration of these together that will achieve the stated aim: namely the development of a coordinated, coherent and comprehensive system, effective in advancing the equality of women, not only by ensuring that those in conflict and post-conflict situations are protected from violence but also that women become active participants in decision-making on all matters of peace building and peacekeeping . With respect to the latter, we endorse the argument in the Draft that an overarching gender perspective must be introduced, not only because there are experiences distinctive to women in conflict situations but also because “the violence and inequalities that women face in crises do not exist in a vacuum but are the direct results and reflections of the violence, discrimination and marginalisation that women face in times of relative peace. Such gender inequality also results in women being largely excluded from decision-making processes, conflict prevention and peace building activities, due to a variety of country-specific social and cultural factors.”

This is relevant to the first Question on the Feedback Template, as to whether there are any additional areas that should be included in Australia's National Action Plan to capture the key issues surrounding Women, Peace and Security.

Because it agrees that women’s experiences of violence and victimisation in conflict situations result from and reflect the violence of the inequalities that women experience in times of relative peace, AFGW believes that more attention should be paid in the National Action Plan (NAP) to improving the educational and economic situation of women, since economic status is a powerful factor in determining whose voices will be heard in decision-making. We suggest, therefore, that the Millennium Development Goals should be added to the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW as relevant for developing a gender framework of the NAP. The Draft mentions “development challenges”, but pays little specific attention to them in the Strategic Objectives which seem to deal more satisfactorily with preventing escalation in an existing conflict, where Australia may be called on to take on a peacekeeping role and assist with recovery and rebuilding (See, for instance Strategic Objective 1.2 under Outcome 1). AFGW submits that improving the economic, social and legal status of women is a prerequisite to improving their capacity to contribute to a social wellbeing that can prevent *initial* conflict situations and that the NAP should consider how this can best be done through instruments such as AusAID, and through support programs tailored to give assistance to country-specific needs (e.g. in the development of legal systems, education, technology – the latter with particular reference to the use of technology by women) . Such pre-emptive action against potential conflict situations should be a stronger part of the Strategic Objectives for Outcome One.

Indicators to measure Australia's progress in incorporating a gender-sensitive approach into the **Prevention** of violence (**Outcome One**) should include as a primary criterion, the absence of armed conflict, especially within the Pacific and South East Asian area, where the efforts of AusAID are concentrated. However, the absence of overt conflict is not in itself a complete guarantee that the intentions of this cohort of SC Resolutions are being achieved, since a despotic government may enforce apparent calm and order while sowing the seeds of future conflict. Other indicators are needed to demonstrate safeguards against *potential* conflict: these include indications of an equitable legal and economic system, legal safeguards for human rights, and evidence that civil society organisations are able to operate freely in peace building and peace-maintaining activities. These same indicators would be indicators in a post-conflict situation of the potential to prevent renewed further conflict.

The achieving of **Outcome Two** – increased **Participation** and empowerment of women and girls in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts – is central to realising the intentions of Resolution 1235. The Draft document gives a number of instances of initiatives locally and internationally that are relevant and appropriate, but such statistics as are quoted indicate that there is a long way to go before the percentage of women involved in consultation, decision-making and positions of authority achieves anything like parity. Care needs to be taken so that programs – for instance on leadership – do not cater for the 'exceptional' woman while doing little to change the situation of the majority of women. It is unlikely that such programs will have large-scale effects unless they co-exist with programs to improve the general socio-economic status of women.

Re Indicators, gender-disaggregated statistics on matters of education, income, employment, health, relativities of legal, professional and political status, are a prerequisite not only for devising effective targeted programs to improve women's participation and empowerment, but also for measuring success in achieving more participation by women (**Strategic Objectives 2.1 and 2.2**)

In relation to **Outcome 3, Protection**, the three Actions cited under Strategic Objective 1.1 are crucial in this area and would bear repeating in this section – namely acknowledgment in the Codes of Conduct for Australian involvement in peacekeeping that there is a need to recognize and deal with different gender-specific experiences and needs among those in conflict situations; the provision of pre-departure and in-theatre training for all Australian police, military and civilian deployments for conflict resolution activities; and encouragement of the inclusion of specialist gender experts in such deployments. It is difficult to provide effective protection to those you don't understand.

In a similar way, legal, administrative, economic or educational teams sent to assist with **Outcome 4**, the rebuilding of a post-conflict society should **all** receive or have received training on gender issues in the relevant culture (not just be supported by attached experts with gender expertise). Every effort should also be made to have females members included in such teams.

As the Draft recognizes, a **monitoring and evaluation** framework will be needed. AFGW submits that the devising of this framework and the evaluation of the plan should involve those same Departments that have worked on the Draft, but that the evaluation should also include an independent expert in the area, perhaps recommended by UNWomen.

In considering **indicators**, it is important that the intentions and outcomes of the overall Plan not be lost sight of in attending to its component parts, especially since the division into component parts often involves repetition and overlap. It would seem that the indicators need to be at two levels: for the component parts *and* for the entire Plan.

Dr Jane Baker, President, AFGW

Attachment A: Policy Resolutions of AFUW and IFUW

1. The 33rd Conference of AFUW (2006) reaffirms Resolution 9 of the 28th IFUW Conference that women are essential to peace and supports the continued implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 by:

1. asking each STA to promote the essential role of women in peace building in their community by:

preventing conflict;
facilitating an early end to conflict;
assisting humanitarian operations and reconstruction processes;
protecting women and girls from gender-based violence; and
working towards ensuring at least 50 percent of participants in such processes are women.
2. asking AFUW to urge the Australian Government to direct the Australian mission at the United Nations to ask the Secretary General to provide regular reports on the progress made towards full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325.

2. The 29th IFUW Conference (2007) resolves: that IFUW, through its representatives at the United Nations, argue

- that increased training in sensitivity to gender issues and to women's and children's rights be given to all U.N. peacekeeping personnel; and,
- that implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 be strictly enforced, particularly with regard to its directions giving women an enhanced role in peacekeeping contingents.

3. The 30th IFUW Conference (2010) resolves that:

1. IFUW re-affirm Resolution 2007/N°8 calling for IFUW, through its representatives at the United Nations, to argue that increased training in sensitivity to gender issues and women's and children's rights be given to all UN peacekeeping personnel; and consequently
2. IFUW urge that the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 be strictly enforced, particularly with regard to giving women an enhanced role in peacekeeping contingents; and
3. IFUW through its representatives at the United Nations, urge the implementation of UNSCRs 1820, 1882, 1888 and 1889.

Attachment B: Letters to the Australian Government



Australian Federation of University Women Inc.

PO Box 224, Enmore NSW 2042

<http://www.afuw.org.au>

July 1, 2009

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP

The Prime Minister

Parliament House

Canberra 2600

Dear Mr Rudd

Re: An Australian National Action Plan for UN Security Resolution 1325

Along with other members of the Australian Federation of University Women, I was recently privileged to take part in a community consultation, funded by the Office for Women and organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The topic of the consultation was whether Australia should join the 14 nations that have, to date, answered the United Nations 2004 call for National Action Plans to implement Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000. Those participating in the consultations were overwhelmingly in favour of Australia's doing so, and we urge you to start the process for an NAP as soon as possible.

Resolution 1325, emanating as it did from one of the UN's most important bodies, was a document of enormous significance, not only for women but for peace-making and peace-building in general. It recognized that women are central to security issues in conflict and that the protection of women and girls in conflict situations must be secured through their participation in all aspects of conflict resolution.

Resolution 1325 has achieved a widespread rhetorical acceptance that is not matched by implementation. Women are still all too often largely invisible in negotiations for resolving conflict, and still bear a heavy burden of suffering in conflict situations, something recently recognized by Resolution 1820, which specifically condemns sexual violence in conflict as a security problem and urges an end to a culture of impunity for such crimes.

A National Action Plan for implementing Resolution 1325 would sit very well within the context of the aim expressed in your National Security Statement to Parliament, namely to promote 'an international environment, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, that is stable, peaceful and prosperous, together with a global rules-based order which enhances Australia's national interests.' It would also address a gender dimension largely neglected in the National Security Statement and the White Paper on Defence, although very much a part of the current thinking of AusAID, as evidenced in *Gender Guidelines: Peace-Building* (2006) and the annual thematic performance report on gender equality initiated in the same year.

An NAP for Resolution 1325 would be a strong sign of your government's willingness to continue to give serious attention to issues affecting women, as well as a sound security measure for Australia and the region.

We urge you to act on this,

Yours Sincerely,

(Dr) Jennifer Strauss AM, President, AFUW Inc.
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East Malvern 3145

Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.

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21 September 2010

The Hon Julia Gillard MP
The Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Ms Gillard,

Re: An Australian National Action Plan for Security Council Resolution 1325

In July 2009 the Federation (writing then as the Federation of University Women) wrote to the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, requesting that the Government follow a recommendation resulting from extensive community consultations held under the auspices of the Office for Women: namely, that Australia should join those other UN countries who had responded to the 2004 UN call for all nation states to prepare a National Action Plan in order to ensure that the terms of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) were being implemented.

As we said in that letter: “Resolution 1325, emanating as it did from one of the UN’s most important bodies, was a document of enormous significance, not only for women but for peace-making and peace-building in general. It recognized that women are central to security issues in conflict and that the protection of women and girls in conflict situations must be secured through their participation in all aspects of conflict resolution.

Resolution 1325 has achieved a widespread rhetorical acceptance that is not matched by implementation. Women are still all too often largely invisible in negotiations for resolving conflict, and still bear a heavy burden of suffering in conflict situations, something recently recognized by Resolution 1820, which specifically condemns sexual violence in conflict as a security problem and urges an end to a culture of impunity for such crimes.”

The response from the Prime Minister’s Office gave us to understand that a policy decision to proceed with such a National Plan had been taken, but we are unable to find evidence of further action in the matter. In the meantime, the following Resolution was passed at the 30th Triennial Conference of the International Federation of University Women held in Mexico in August 2010:

1. That IFUW re-affirm Resolution 2007/N°8 calling for IFUW, through its representatives at the United Nations, to argue that increased training in sensitivity to gender issues and to women's and children's rights be given to all UN peacekeeping personnel, and that implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 be strictly enforced, particularly with regard to its directions giving women an enhanced role in peacekeeping contingents; and

2. That IFUW, through its representatives at the United Nations, urge the implementation of UNSCRs 1820, 1882, 1888 and 1889.

National Federations and Associations were required by the Plan of Action to encourage their governments to develop National Action Plans with timetables and benchmarks for actual progress, to ensure the implementation of these Resolutions.

As one of the National Federations voting in support of this Resolution, we accordingly write to ask:

- whether it remains the policy of the ALP Government to proceed with a National Action Plan;
- whether any progress has in fact already been made on an NAP;
- whether such a Plan will include the further UNSCR Resolutions mentioned above, which have been passed to supplement and strengthen the original Resolution 1325.

If in fact progress has been made, we would be delighted to receive information, but if the development of a Plan has been overtaken by the political events of 2010 we do most strongly urge that it be re-instated as a priority of your Government,

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) Jane Baker,

President, Australian Federation of Graduate Women

Cc: The Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for the Status of Women