

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE COMMEMORATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNSCR 1325
THEME: ADVANCING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS) AGENDA
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS AND CONCRETE ACTION BEYOND 2020
NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 1, 2020 | 16:00 TO 18:30 HOURS (GMT-3)

Concept Note

I.0. Introduction

The year 2020 marks the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325. The adoption of this resolution is a turning point in understanding and recognizing the role of women and girls in addressing the issues of peace and security. The resolution addresses the impact of war on women and women's contributions to peace and security under four pillars or focus areas, namely: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Relief and Recovery. It calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making. The resolution also specifically calls on all parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. The resolution further seeks the commitment of all stakeholders to implement effective strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; strengthening women's rights under national law; and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes. The fourth commitment in the resolution provides for the advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens and consider the needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post conflict reconstruction.

In the years since, UNSCR 1325 has been strengthened by the adoption of nine additional Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). These resolutions form the basis of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The framing of Women Peace and Security agenda in Africa finds its history and origin in the Windhoek Declaration 2000 which led to the birth and adoption of UNSCR 1325. Since then, Africa has made progress in terms of providing legal and policy frameworks and establishing institutional mechanisms for implementation of WPS agenda. Nevertheless, financing and monitoring implementation of developed laws and policies needs to be strengthened. Implementation of most Regional and National Action Plans on WPS are heavily dependent on donor funding.

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2.0. Rationale

Despite the role African women play in driving political change that leads to peace process, they are sidelined by the formal processes that follow. Women’s participation in peace processes and politics is quite often symbolic. Women’s political participation is often resisted by cultural norms. Due attention needs to be given by all actors involved in implementing the WPS agenda in the region to broaden the political space for women, and young women in particular, by critically assessing and addressing the challenges women face in participating in leadership and politics.

There is also lack of coordination and cooperation by different actors working on Women, Peace and Security at the regional and national levels. Women’s civil-society organizations working on peacebuilding, conflict prevention and gender equality remain underfunded and not well integrated into the mainstream policy discussions on WPS in the region.

In presence of these challenges and emerging issues such as violent extremism, climate change, irregular migration, displacement, and the pandemics like the COVID-19, that continue to affect the implementation of the agenda in Africa, 2020 cannot be viewed only through a celebratory lens. Rather, it should be taken as a time of revisiting the commitments made, responses given to key WPS issues, with a view to create an enabling environment for women to thrive and have meaningful contribution in peace and nation building. It should also be a moment of establishing common understanding and approach on the agenda among different actors mandated with and/ or engaged in implementation of WPS Agenda. It should be a time of renewing commitment to enhance performance in coordination, implementation, monitoring implementation as well as to increase ownership & accountability at all levels.

It is therefore against this background that UNOAU, the AU Commission, in partnership with the Swedish and Norwegian Embassies are organizing a virtual High-Level Dialogue on WPS in Africa. The event is intended to bring together actors involved in peace and security in the region, to identify opportunities for enhancing the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in the continent, and to identify opportunities for effective collaboration, engagement and implementation of the WPS agenda as a whole, as well as to continue to enhance women’s participation. The dialogue is also intended to provide a platform to strengthen networking among participants to continue to work together beyond the conference to translate the outcomes of the conference into action and make difference in the lives of women on the ground.

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2.0. Objectives

The High-Level Dialogue aims to achieve the following:

- a) Provide a platform for African women to engage and share their experiences in addressing WPS and chart relevant concrete actions to accelerate positive results beyond 2020;
- b) Strengthening partnerships for the delivery of the WPS agenda in realizing the aspirations set in the AU's flagship initiative 'Silencing the Guns in Africa';
- c) Identify concrete actions to strengthen accountability in the implementation of the WPS agenda in the region.

3.0. Dialogue approach

The 2-day virtual dialogue will adopt a participatory approach with moderated discussions. Participants will be encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences on the issues under discussion.

Each day, the conference will have two main sessions:

- a) **Plenary session** where high level AU and UN representatives will deliver opening remarks. Two Presentations will be made on selected thematic areas/ issues each day to lay a ground for an in-depth discussion and recommendation in the interactive sessions;
- b) **Interactive session** in which participants will discuss specific topics in virtual break-out rooms.

4.0. Thematic Areas/ Issues to be discussed

The discussions and reflections during the two days will be based on the following key areas:

- i) Women's Meaningful Participation for Sustainable Peace and Nation Building
- ii) Women's Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women
- iii) Strengthening Accountability for implementation of WPS Agenda
- iv) Strengthening Partnership for Accelerated Implementation of WPS Agenda

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5.0. Dialogue format

5.1. Methodology

- i) **Opening Sessions** will be held on each day of the High-Level Dialogue, intended to provide time for reflection on the overarching issues for discussion.
- ii) **Plenary Sessions:** Presentations on the selected thematic areas/issues will be made in the plenary. This will be followed by a reflection by representatives of UN, AUC and Member States. The presentations and the reflections to be made in the plenary are intended to provide background to the discussions in the interactive sessions.
- iii) **Interactive sessions:** There will be 2 simultaneous break-out/interactive sessions conducted each day. Each group will have a facilitator and a rapporteur. The discussion will be led by the woman representatives who will then present three or four key recommendations from conducted discussions to the plenary session.
- iv) **Overall facilitation:** The High-Level Dialogue will be moderated by a Main Facilitator during the plenary sessions.
- v) **Key discussion:** Plenary discussions will be used to build consensus on key actions moving forward.

5.2. Equipment & Language

Technology platform: Given that this is a virtual meeting, a choice of a user-friendly digital platform will be used.

Language: English and French.

6.0. Participation

Envisaged participation would include SRSG UNOAU, AUDPA Commissioner; AU Peace and Security Commissioner, AUC Special Envoy on WPS, UN and AU Youth Envoys; Ambassadors to the African Union and Ethiopia, Foreign Minister/Ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia, Foreign Minister/Ambassador of Norway to the AU, Representatives of RECs, Representatives of UN Missions, UNDP Africa Regional Directors, Women featured in the 1325 book; women peacekeepers; key partners; NGOs and Think Tanks; interested stakeholders, UN agencies.

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7.0. Expected Outcome

The outcome of the virtual conference will be a summary of the discussions (without attribution to specific participants) and recommendations. The summary will be transmitted to the leadership of the United Nations and African Union Commission, through UNOAU.

8.0. Venue and Date

Venue: Virtual Dialogue convened by UNOAU and AUC

Date and Time: 30th November 2020 & 1st December 2020 from 16:00 to 18:30 Hours – Addis Ababa Time (GMT-3)

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