



NATO Summit, Newport, Wales 2014 **Gender Action for Peace and Security¹ Recommendations**

The people of Afghanistan, their government, and the international political, military and development actors who support them face a crucial period in 2014. As Afghans witness their first democratic transfer of power, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) ends its combat mission and prepares for a new critical training and support operation from 2015: Resolute Support.

Against this backdrop, the UK has a unique part to play as host to the 2014 NATO Summit and a leading member of the alliance. It is vital that the UK Government uses this opportunity to ensure the interests of all Afghans are addressed and that the benefits of Afghanistan's development are widespread and equitable.

Progress in fulfilling women's rights in Afghanistan represents a key indicator of wider progress in laying the foundations of an inclusive, democratic, and peaceful society. Advances in women's rights and participation – in education, employment, public life, and other spheres – are primarily an achievement of Afghans themselves. Yet, the UK and its NATO allies as well as its development partners involved in Afghanistan continue to have a critical role to play – as well as important responsibilities – to ensure that these hard-won and still fragile gains are consolidated and expanded.

The UK and its NATO allies have collectively made significant efforts to improve the professionalism and responsiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). This includes improving the training of male and female Afghan military and police personnel in human rights and women's rights, and support for the recruitment of female staff. Such efforts should be intensified and expanded, however, to entrench these gains and address various threats to their sustainability.

To support the achievement and sustainability of such efforts, it is essential that Afghan women's representatives are meaningfully consulted and involved in NATO's planning and decision-making processes. This will help ensure that relevant plans and strategies are well informed and gain the support of Afghan women's groups and progressive civil society. It will also assist efforts by the UK and its NATO allies to fulfil their obligations to promote and implement UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

Recommendations for the UK:

- 1) Ensure women's right to participate in all decision-making that affects their lives.** The UK should encourage and support an effective and formal consultation process allowing Afghan women to meaningfully contribute to the agenda and discussions well in advance of the NATO Summit; women must have sufficient space at related events to influence the outcomes; women and the issues affecting them must not be sidelined in discussions.
- 2) Ensure UK and its NATO allies intensify measures to develop more gender sensitive Afghan National Security Forces as part of efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan.** Support for the ANSF should prioritise i) training on human rights and women's rights and ii) support for increasing female recruitment, retention and roles.

¹ Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is a network of development, human rights, humanitarian and peacebuilding NGOs and practitioners. GAPS promotes, facilitates and monitors the meaningful inclusion of gender in all aspects of UK policy and practice on peace and security.

Detailed Recommendations:

1) Ensure women's right to participate in all decision making that affects their lives. As a signatory to UNSCR 1325, the UK must fulfil its duty to support the genuine and meaningful participation of women in economic, peace, security and transition processes.

- I. **Widespread consultation with Afghan women:** The incorporation of women's perspectives will be fundamental to the success of the outcomes of the NATO Summit. As host, the UK Government should ensure a representative consultation with Afghan women human rights defenders, women's civil society networks and women's rights organisations takes place. Consultation meetings with CSOs should be convened in Brussels and Kabul before the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in June in order to inform the Summit's agenda and decision-making. Given security risks and considerations of these organisations, the Afghanistan-based consultations should be on a confidential basis.
- II. **Ensure commitments made to Afghan women are high on the agenda of the NATO Summit:** Discussions on UNSCR 1325 and how to improve its implementation in Afghanistan should be given significant time at the NATO Summit. It should consider the recently published 3rd annual report of implementation and how recommendations from the report will be taken forward in Afghanistan and NATO.
- III. **Ensure issues of importance to women are not sidelined:** Women must be viewed as equal stakeholders in all areas of Afghanistan's development and security and their voices must be heard across the full range of decisions that affect their lives. At the Summit itself, in side events, and in the follow-up process, efforts should be made by the UK and NATO to ensure meaningful participation of Afghan women both from state institutions and civil society. Their views must be heard and listened to. This can only happen if they have space and time to participate at each stage.
- IV. **Commitments on Afghanistan made by the NATO Summit should implement UNSCR 1325 in line with recommendations outlined by relevant CSOs in Afghanistan and their international CSO partners:** The UK should use its influence and role as host to ensure that commitments related to UNSCR 1325 are guided by consultations with relevant Afghan and international CSOs and their recommendations.

2) Ensure the UK and its NATO allies intensify measures to develop more gender-sensitive Afghan National Security Forces as part of efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan.

NATO's adoption of a UNSCR 1325 strategy and policy represented a positive step at the policy level. The Summit is an opportunity to put this policy into practice. The UK government should:

- I. **Support more effective awareness of and training on human rights and women's rights for all ANSF personnel:** including increased training for the Afghan Local Police. The UK and its allies can help achieve this partly through specific donor funding for promoting women's rights and participation in the ANSF, increased support through multilateral actors such as EUPOL, maintaining effective gender advisors in the Resolute Support mission, and through training and female participation at the Afghan National Army Officers Academy.
- II. **Increase support for measures that tackle barriers to female recruitment and retention and enhance their roles and career development:** Progress and challenges in relation to the ANSF goal of 10% female recruitment by 2024 and 5,000 female police in the ANP should be reviewed and specific support (including advocacy and earmarked UK funding) should be provided for increased female recruitment and retention in all branches of the ANSF (especially in the police). There should be increased resourcing of police Family Response Units, improved working conditions and career development for female ANSF personnel, and more effective female roles and leadership.
- III. **Encourage improved vetting, oversight and accountability mechanisms for all the ANSF, applied to the ALP and other irregular forces:** This requires increased advocacy and support by the UK and its international partners for the Afghan government in creating well-publicised, transparent, and independent mechanisms for investigating complaints and providing reparations that are easily accessible for both men and women. These should include civilian casualty mitigation units within all ANSF structures that proactively monitor and investigate civilian deaths and injuries caused by the ANSF as well as a more effective Police Ombudsman office.