

Position Paper: Publication of the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

25 November 2010

GAPS welcomes the publication of the new National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) by the UK government. The NAP has been improved from the original 12-point Plan published in March 2006 and we are pleased that HMG has developed a more sophisticated structure for the Plan. In particular, we are encouraged by the government's new commitment to formalising monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for women, peace and security commitments, including formal reporting to parliament. We are also reassured that civil society will be given room to input into further development of the Plan over the coming year. GAPS is committed to fulfilling our role in this and will actively participate in the process. The inclusion of three country-specific action plans in the revised NAP is a positive development. We look forward to similar such plans being rolled out across the UK Government's global network of embassy's and country offices.

Civil society consultation. GAPS has consistently lobbied for a revision of the NAP since 2006 and was hopeful when the renewal process was announced in October 2009. However, the consultation process has not been entirely satisfactory and there are important lessons to be learned for future consultations. The procedure was characterised by delays, with short notice given for input, and consultation with civil society was very limited in nature. In recent months, a small number of GAPS members were invited to comment on the draft NAP and are encouraged that a number of our recommendations have been incorporated. **However, we must make clear that our participation in the consultation should not be interpreted as our acceptance of the process by which civil society input was sought.** Rather, we felt it necessary to assist those government officials who were developing the plan with limited time and human and financial resources allocated to them by HMG. We maintain that the NAP would have been much improved if civil society had been able to fully participate in a formal, timetabled and transparent consultation process.

UN Security Council 10th Anniversary Open Debate. We were disappointed no Minister from any of the three departments responsible for the NAP participated in the ministerial-level Open Debate in the UN Security Council on 26 October 2010. This is regrettable. Ministerial attendance at the Security Council to present the new document would have publically demonstrated high-level UK commitment to driving this agenda forward. This represents a significant missed opportunity and puts the UK's position as the unofficial lead-state on women, peace and security in the UN Security Council and the commitment of UK Ministers to advancing this agenda into question. We hope that there will be a formal launch of the NAP hosted by the UK Mission to the UN in New York, akin to the London launch on 25 November 2010 – the next ministerial visit would provide an ideal opportunity for this.

Ensuring impact. GAPS is concerned that fundamental institutional barriers to operationalising the NAP and implementing UNSCR 1325 remain. These institutional issues have not been comprehensively addressed during the review process. Firstly, GAPS believes both the lack of senior level leadership and cross-departmental coordination on UNSCR 1325 will undermine efforts to operationalise the NAP. Secondly, we note that no funds or resources have been clearly allocated to activities committed to in the Plan. Clearly allocated funding, cross-government co-ordination and leadership are central to the successful implementation of the Plan. GAPS calls on the UK Government to ensure that any further planning does not delay actual action on the full integration of UNSCR 1325 and it's sister resolutions in the UK's work on peace

and security. Parts of the new Plan can be actioned immediately – in particular, the bi-lateral section of the NAP, which can be taken forward without need for further planning or delay.

Finally, it is not clear how the Plan will take into account the situation in the UK. Like the previous Plan there are no specific provisions relating to the implementation of women, peace and security resolutions in post-conflict Northern Ireland. There is no information on how (or if) the Northern Ireland Office were consulted in the development of the NAP. We hope this will be redressed during the Plan's annual review process.