



# Security Council

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## Women and peace and security

### Report of the Secretary-General\*

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000); resolution 2122 (2013), in which the Council called for updates on progress across all areas of the women and peace and security agenda, highlighting gaps and challenges; and resolution 2493 (2019), in which the Council called for reinforced measures to fully implement the agenda. This report tracks trends across conflict-affected countries<sup>1</sup> and follows up on the Secretary-General's directives to the United Nations and on the five goals for the decade articulated in the reports on women, peace and security from 2019 and 2020, especially the goal on financing for the women and peace and security agenda. The report is informed by data and analysis provided by entities of the United Nations system, including peacekeeping operations, special political missions and country teams, inputs from Member States, regional organizations and civil society, and analysis from other globally recognized data sources.

2. The data and findings in the present report paint a stark picture. Amid record levels of armed conflict and violence, progress made over decades is vanishing before our eyes. Generational gains in women's rights hang in the balance around the world, undercutting the transformative potential of women's leadership and inclusion in the pursuit of peace.

3. The global community has repeatedly committed to ensuring women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery, and to upholding their rights during war. However, in recent years, the annual reports of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security have warned of stagnation and regression across key indicators on women and peace and security. One key factor undermining progress is the escalating backlash against women's rights and gender equality.

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\* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

<sup>1</sup> These include: (a) countries/situations in connection with items of which the Security Council is currently seized, and which have been considered by the Council at a formal meeting during the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 (see S/2024/10/Rev.1); (b) countries with peacekeeping or special political missions in 2023; and (c) countries declared eligible for funding under the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund in 2023.



Women's human rights defenders and civil society organizations on the frontlines of crises are too often under attack themselves. In 2023, several Governments restricted the use of gender-related terminology that has been universally accepted for decades, with serious consequences for the work of both the United Nations and women-led civil society organizations.<sup>2</sup> Restrictions on women's and girls' education, freedom of movement and right to work, such as in Afghanistan, Yemen and other contexts, represent blatant human rights violations and abuses that have a severe impact on women's and girls' lives. They also create an existential and operational challenge, including for the delivery of humanitarian aid, thereby limiting women and girls from accessing relief.

4. Another set of factors is linked to reduced opportunities to advance the women and peace and security agenda. Increased geopolitical divisions make it difficult to advance comprehensive solutions to conflict. Instead of diplomacy and mediation, including under the auspices of the United Nations or regional organizations, more Governments and non-State armed actors are reverting to military action and arms proliferation.<sup>3</sup> Critical tools used to advance the women and peace and security agenda in its first two decades, including peace negotiations, transitional justice, peacekeeping and special political missions, sanctions, human rights monitoring, and disarmament and demobilization initiatives, have more recently seen reduced levels of support, which has lessened their effectiveness.

5. Finally, power and decision-making on peace and security matters remain overwhelmingly dominated by men, and progress has been disturbingly slow in terms of ending impunity for those who perpetrate atrocities against women and girls. In 2023, the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled compared with the previous year,<sup>4</sup> the number of United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence was 50 per cent higher than the year before,<sup>5</sup> and the number of girls affected by grave violations in situations of armed conflict increased by 35 per cent.<sup>6</sup> And yet, even basic public awareness about these injustices is lacking. A recent study showed that while media coverage about conflict increased more than sixfold between 2013 and 2023, only 5 per cent of the coverage focused on women's experiences in war, and only 0.04 per cent of articles published about armed conflict in that period mention women's contribution as leaders.<sup>7</sup> The situation of women and girls affected by intersecting forms of discrimination is even more worrisome and requires greater attention.

6. As long as oppressive patriarchal social structures and gender biases hold back half our societies, peace will remain elusive. For that reason, the Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace<sup>8</sup> strongly emphasizes the promise of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life and at all levels of decision-making on peace and security, grounded in human rights, as our path to a better future.

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<sup>2</sup> See [S/2024/373](#) and [S/2024/591](#).

<sup>3</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Global military spending surges amid war, rising tensions and insecurity", 22 April 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See [S/2024/385](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [S/2024/292](#); and United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "15th report of the United Nations Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence", factsheet, April 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Based on internal calculations, see [S/2024/384](#) and [S/2023/363](#).

<sup>7</sup> Emily Janoch and others, "Women in war: leaders, responders, and potential", Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, May 2024.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, "Our Common Agenda policy brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace", July 2023 ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.8](#)).

## II. Goals for the decade on women and peace and security: Financing for the women and peace and security agenda

7. The lack of adequate funding is a key challenge in addressing the above-mentioned sources of stagnation and regression and realizing commitments on women and peace and security. Support for the agenda often takes the shape of small-scale projects with limited funding, and in several settings, resources for implementation have either not materialized or dwindle rapidly when government, donor and security priorities shift. In addition, the Secretary-General has detailed how the international financial architecture has failed many, by widening inequalities between and within countries, and how current global economic and financial systems are therefore complicit in perpetuating gender inequality. Women have historically been marginalized in all areas of society, including in economic and financial systems, which has resulted in unequal access to resources, opportunities and decision-making power. In conflict and crisis settings, the contrasts between those with access to resources and those without are often shockingly apparent.

8. The share of overall bilateral official development assistance (ODA) with gender equality objectives has dropped from 45 per cent to 44 per cent, after having increased during the previous decade. A similar drop is observed in bilateral ODA to conflict-affected contexts. The latest data show that in 2021–2022, bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts<sup>9</sup> stood at \$47.7 billion on average per year. Of that amount, \$20.5 billion included gender equality objectives (see figure I). However, only \$2.5 billion (5 per cent) was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective,<sup>10</sup> a drop from \$2.8 billion on average per year in 2019–2020, despite calls for moving towards and exceeding targets such as the United Nations minimum target of 15 per cent. Bilateral aid supporting feminist, women-led and women’s rights organizations and movements in conflict-affected countries remained at a low level of \$142 million (0.3 per cent of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts) on average per year in 2021–2022, a decrease from \$191 million in 2019–2020. This figure is far from the United Nations recommendation to allocate a minimum of 1 per cent of ODA to women’s organizations in conflict-affected countries, especially grass-roots groups that are mobilizing for peace.<sup>11</sup>

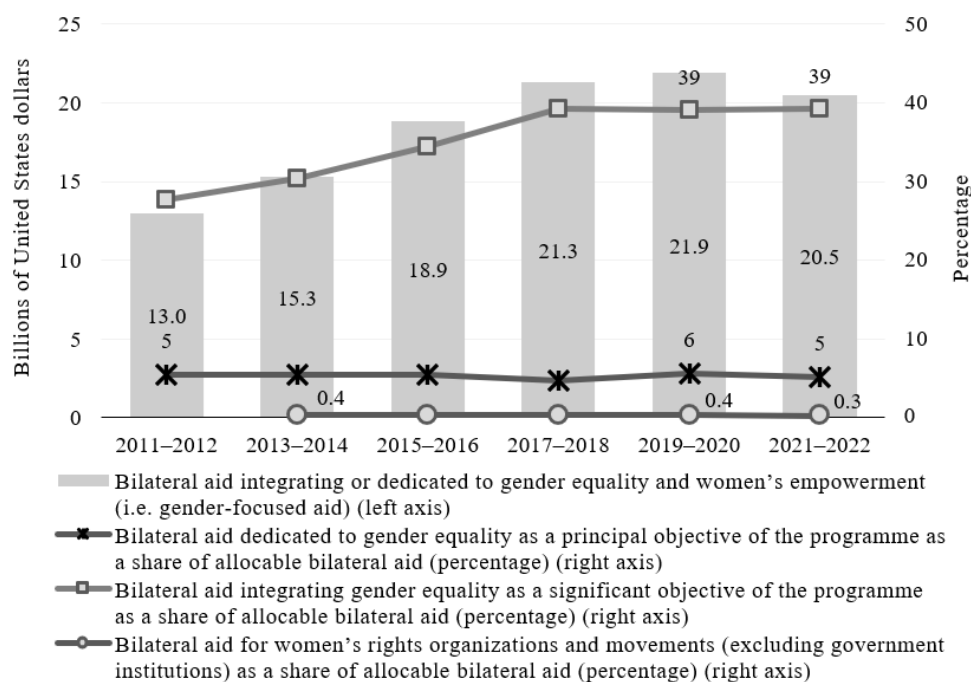
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<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of the statistics in paragraph 8 and figure I, conflict-affected contexts include countries identified as “fragile” according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

<sup>10</sup> According to OECD gender equality policy marker, this refers to gender equality is the main objective of the project/programme and is fundamental to its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this objective.

<sup>11</sup> See [S/2023/725](#); and United Nations, “Our Common Agenda policy brief 9”, p. 20.

Figure I  
**Bilateral aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in conflict-affected contexts, annual average per biennium (2011–2012 to 2021–2022)**



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System database, accessed June 2024.

9. New research for the present report<sup>12</sup> examined the gap between the proliferation of pledges to fund women's civil society organizations and the actual levels of funding reaching women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings, which have decreased for three years in a row. The study found that these initiatives are still concentrated among a few donors and in some cases, may not represent the provision of entirely new resources, but the repackaging of existing allocations. Furthermore, the study found that a significant share goes to donor-based and international non-governmental organizations, rather than directly to local organizations in conflict-affected countries, and that while donors are familiar with the minimum 15 per cent financing target for gender equality, they are not aware of the goal to reach 1 per cent for women's organizations, first proposed by the Secretary-General on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and reiterated in A New Agenda for Peace. The study also suggests that the shift in focus towards humanitarian aid, away from peace and security and sustainable development, is having an impact on the resources reaching women's organizations in conflict-affected countries, as the humanitarian sector integrates gender equality the least, with only 17 per cent of bilateral humanitarian aid targeting gender equality as a principal or secondary objective, compared with 50 per cent in the peace and security sector. Finally, the study recommended improvements in tracking systems, as some of the resources channelled through the United Nations or to local women-led organizations in other sectors in conflict-affected settings are not being adequately captured.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Lost in Translation: Unravelling the Gap between Global Commitments and Funding for Women's Organizations in Conflict-Affected Contexts* (forthcoming).

10. Some donor countries stand out in terms of their support for gender equality in countries affected by conflict. Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland allocated over two thirds of their ODA with gender equality as a policy objective. These high shares indicate that gender equality is a clear policy intention for these Governments when designing their programmes and projects. In terms of volume of ODA for gender equality, the United States of America and Germany ranked highest, with an average of \$3.6 billion and \$2.6 billion per year over the past decade, respectively.<sup>13</sup> A few donors have created dedicated funds and grant mechanisms to support civil society organizations. Examples include the Women’s Voice and Leadership Programme (Canada), the “SDG5 Fund” and linked financing mechanisms such as the Leading from the South programme (Kingdom of the Netherlands), and the Support Fund for Feminist Organizations (France). Nevertheless, the overall low and stagnant share of ODA with gender equality objectives highlights the need for additional donors to follow suit and increase their support for gender equality and women’s organizations.

11. In 2024, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted a recommendation on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance,<sup>14</sup> in which members committed to increase financing for local women’s rights organizations, feminist movements and women’s funds, and government partners, in order to promote gender equality.

12. A major challenge with respect to assessing resources for the women and peace and security agenda, and in accurately capturing the volume of aid going to women’s organizations, is a weakness in systems for monitoring financial investments for gender equality, women’s and girls’ rights and women’s civil society, in particular for conflict and crisis settings. Among 25 conflict-affected countries with data, only 7 countries (28 per cent) have comprehensive systems to track and make budgetary allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment.<sup>15</sup>

13. The tracking and allocation of financial resources similarly remain areas for improvement for the United Nations. Among entities with data, results for 2023 were mixed. Although seven entities reported having adopted a financial target of 15 per cent or more dedicated for gender equality, the application of the target varies, with some applying it only to parts of the budget. Some 14 entities allocated 5 per cent or less to gender equality as a principal objective. Among 108 United Nations country teams applying the gender equality marker in 2023, 25 country teams with a joint workplan allocated 15 per cent or more of the available resources under their annual funding framework to activities with gender equality as a principal objective, compared with 26 country teams in 2022.<sup>16</sup>

14. The United Nations System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, which was launched in 2024, requests that 15 per cent be established as the standard allocation for expenditures in the United Nations system dedicated to outputs with gender equality as an objective by 2026. All entity programme and fundraising departments have been requested to put in place plans to reach that target by 2030. The Acceleration Plan also recommends that all new multi-partner trust funds

<sup>13</sup> Based on OECD Creditor Reporting System database, available at [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/creditor-reporting-system\\_dev-cred-data-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/creditor-reporting-system_dev-cred-data-en) (accessed on June 2024).

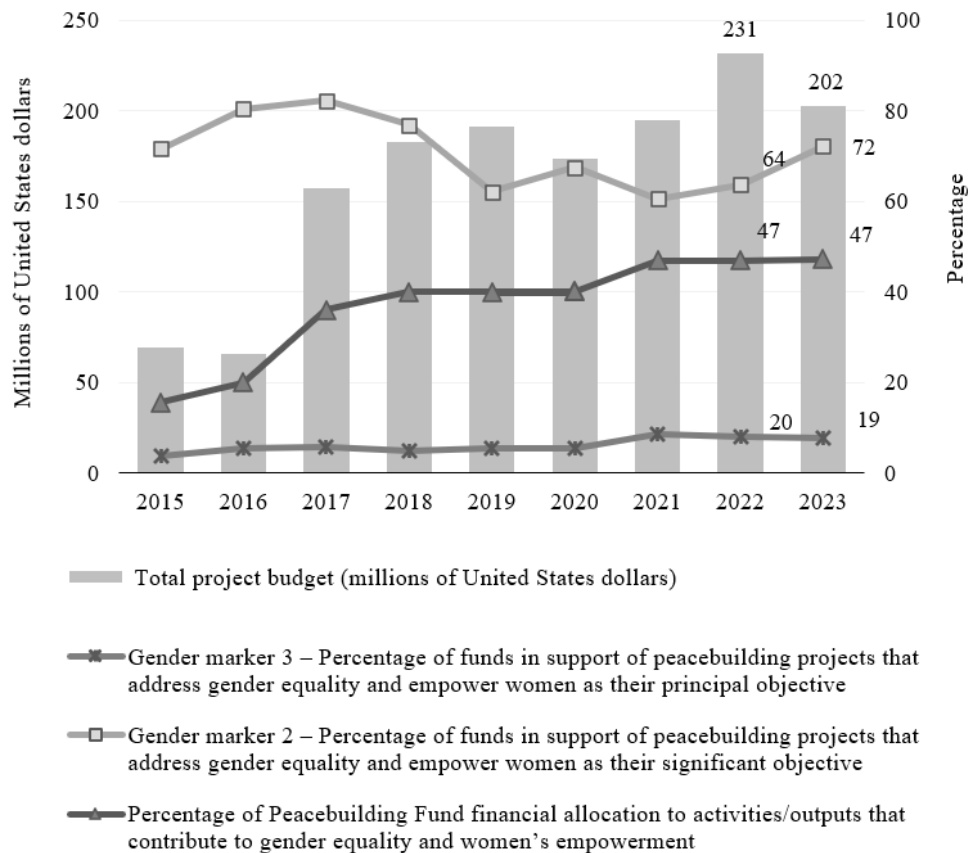
<sup>14</sup> OECD, document OECD/LEGAL/5022.

<sup>15</sup> Indicator 5.c.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. data from United Nations, SDG Global database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

<sup>16</sup> Based on updated data set on joint work plan accessed 2 June 2024, the number of country teams applying the gender equality marker increased to 108, from 95 in 2022. See United Nations Sustainable Development Group, Sustainable Development Goal data portal, available at <https://www.uninfo.org/>.

establish a 40 per cent target for gender equality programming and coordination. The target is inspired by the Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund, which for the seventh year in a row exceeded its internal target allocation of 30 per cent to gender equality. In 2023, the Fund approved \$202.5 million in support for peacebuilding initiatives in 36 countries, of which 47.3 per cent (\$95.8 million) was focused on supporting gender equality (see figure II). The Fund’s investments in spearheading women and youth engagement were larger than any other pooled fund in the United Nations system. The success of the Fund is founded on several key components: committed senior leadership; the tracking of gender-focused allocations as an obligatory measure, rather than an option; clear methodology and guidance; dedicated gender expertise; a requirement for gender-sensitive conflict analysis to guide programming; and staff capacity for monitoring and reporting.

Figure II  
**Peacebuilding Fund allocations to projects promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, 2015–2023**



Source: Data from the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (accessed June 2024).

Note: The financial allocation of 47 per cent in support of gender equality in 2023 (line with triangles) was tracked at the output or activity level, instead of at the project level. The percentage is calculated as the sum of financial allocations to projects with gender equality as a principal objective (i.e. gender marker 3 projects) and the allocations within gender marker 2 and gender marker 1 projects that contribute to gender equality.

15. In 2023, 25 United Nations multi-partner trust funds (38 per cent) and 55 stand-alone joint programmes (47 per cent) reported allocations of 15 per cent or more to programmes with gender equality as the principal objective.<sup>17</sup> Those percentages reflected a decrease compared with 2022, from 42 per cent and 54 per cent for multi-partner trust funds and joint programmes, respectively.

16. As humanitarian crises worsen, many humanitarian organizations are facing unprecedented funding challenges and shortfalls.<sup>18</sup> Between 2021 and 2023, greater demands to address, prevent and eliminate gender-based violence have prompted the United Nations to increase its funding requests for this issue by 40 per cent.<sup>19</sup> Those needs have not been met with a commensurate rise in funding. In 2023, only 23.1 per cent of total requirements for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence were met,<sup>20</sup> making up less than 1 per cent of humanitarian aid spending.<sup>21</sup> Of these funds, only a fraction reaches local, front-line organizations. An evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund's \$25 million global block grant to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Population Fund for work to address gender-based violence, which concluded in 2023, showed that 40 per cent of all funding was subgranted to local women's organizations across 11 countries, and affirmed that investments in women-led civil society in crisis are both feasible and effective. The Central Emergency Response Fund is now working to implement the financing benchmark of subgranting at least 30 per cent of its total funding for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence to local women-led organizations.

17. In 2023, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated \$467 million (70 per cent), compared with \$555 million (76 per cent) in 2022, to projects aimed at contributing to gender equality (see figure III). That funding provided assistance to 18.4 million women and girls (56 per cent of the total beneficiaries).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, an estimated 2.7 million persons with disabilities benefited from humanitarian assistance funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund, including some 777,400 women and 1.4 million children. In the same year, the country-based pooled funds allocated \$1.03 billion (91 per cent) to advance gender equality in 16 countries. The proportion of funding from country-based pooled funds allocated to national non-governmental organizations increased from 36 per cent of total funding in 2022 to 39 per cent in 2023. The funding allocated to national or local women-led organizations in 2023 was \$83 million, corresponding to 7 per cent of total funding from country-based pooled funds, a slight improvement from 6 per cent in 2022. Several local women's organizations have reported challenges in accessing a greater amount of funding, including as a result of language barriers, eligibility criteria and burdensome application and reporting procedures.

<sup>17</sup> Based on a survey by the Fiduciary Management Oversight Group in 2023.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Progress on coordinated plans", Financial Tracking Service database. Available at <https://fts.unocha.org/home/2024/plans>.

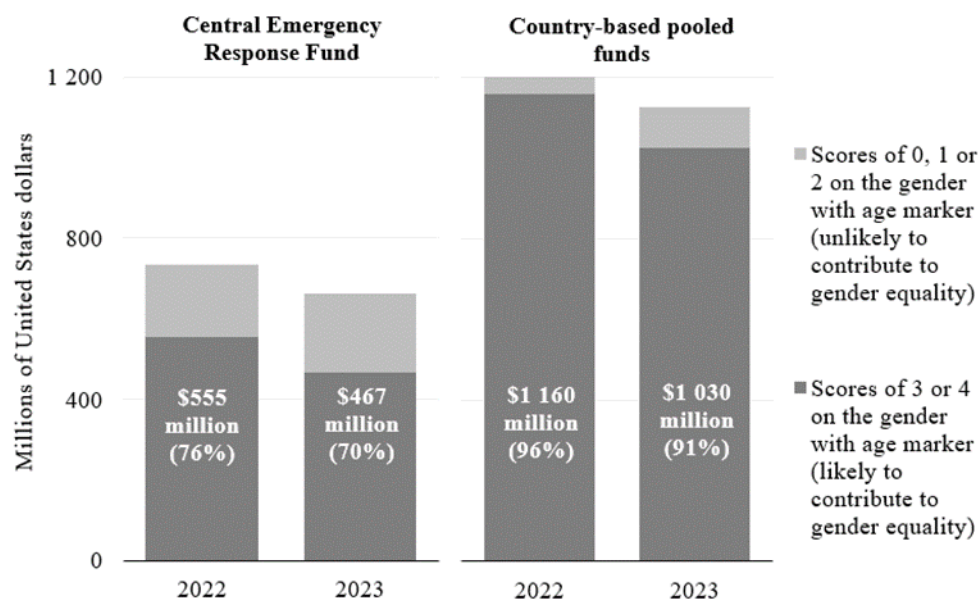
<sup>19</sup> Paula Dupraz-Dobias, "Services under threat after UN emergency funding for gender-based violence runs out", *The New Humanitarian*, 29 January 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Data retrieved from the Financial Tracking Service database in August 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Calculations based on data from the Financial Tracking Service database.

<sup>22</sup> *CERF Annual Results Report 2023* (United Nations publication, 2024).

Figure III  
**Funding allocated by the Central Emergency Response Fund and country-based pooled funds to projects that contribute to gender equality, as measured by the gender with age marker, 2022 and 2023**



Source: Data on the gender with age marker from the country-based pooled funds database, available at [https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/#gam\\_heading](https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/#gam_heading) (accessed June 2024); and from the annual results reports of the Central Emergency Response Fund for 2022 and 2023.

18. Over the past decade, the number of pooled funds dedicated to the advancement of specific gender equality goals and commitments has increased.<sup>23</sup> The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund<sup>24</sup> is the only global financing mechanism dedicated to mobilizing support for local and grass-roots women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings. In 2023, the Fund raised over \$45 million for local women's civil society on the front lines, the highest annual amount mobilized since the Fund's inception. Since its establishment in 2016, the Fund has supported over 1,300 local women's civil society organizations across 44 crisis-affected countries, including providing 158 organizations with critical institutional funding to safeguard their existence, strengthen their capacities and enable them to adapt to evolving challenges. That role in safeguarding the existence of such organizations is important, as a lack of core funding has long been identified as a significant gap. Notably, close to half of the Fund's civil society partners have accessed funding from the United Nations for the very first time through support from the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

19. On 8 March 2023, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund launched its Invest-In-Women global campaign and has so far mobilized over \$70 million in new financing<sup>25</sup> for local women's organizations towards its target of \$300 million, which it aims to reach by the end of 2025. This important target to raise net new resources for women's organizations working in conflict and crisis settings is reinforced in the United Nations System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan.

<sup>23</sup> This includes the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, the conflict-related sexual violence prevention multi-partner trust fund, United Nations Action multi-partner trust fund, the Spotlight Initiative Fund and the United Nations trust fund to end violence against women.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://wphfund.org/>.

<sup>25</sup> Including multi-year commitments up until 2027.



### III. Update on progress, gaps and challenges across other areas of the women and peace and security agenda

#### A. Women's meaningful participation in peace processes

20. As violent conflicts continue to rise and expand in intensity and scope, seeking and sustaining peace is of utmost priority. The human, environmental and social costs are indefensible, violating international norms and undermining the Charter of the United Nations. In 2023, most dialogue and negotiation processes stalled or faced serious setbacks.

21. Beyond the United Nations, many more actors, including regional and subregional organizations, Member States, private entities and civil society, are today involved in mediation efforts to support peace processes in different ways. Notably, emerging stakeholders and regional organizations have taken on more active roles in the mediation space. All mediation actors can make a substantial impact by advocating and supporting women's equal right to participation and by elevating the women and peace and security agenda in their peacemaking efforts, and thus raise the prospects of peace efforts succeeding and holding.

22. Initial new global data collected by UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor,<sup>26</sup> show a lack of overall progress on women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes. Preliminary data from the analysis of over 50 processes indicate that in 2023, on average, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 per cent of mediators and 26.6 per cent of signatories to peace agreements and ceasefire agreements. The proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5 per cent if agreements in Colombia are excluded. The data show little progress over the past decade. None of the peace agreements reached in 2023 included a women's group or representative as a signatory.<sup>27</sup> Colombia was the setting with the highest direct participation of women as negotiators in the peace effort, with women comprising 50 per cent of the delegation of the Government of Colombia and 25 per cent of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) delegation to the talks between the Government and ELN.

23. Research covering the period 2005–2019 indicates that countries with dedicated policies on women and peace and security, such as national action plans, are more likely to appoint women mediators to peace processes. At the aggregate level, countries with national action plans have appointed women to 22 per cent of mediator roles over this period, compared with 6.25 per cent for countries without such plans.<sup>28</sup> Countries such as Mexico, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Sweden and Switzerland all made dedicated efforts to elevate the women and peace and security agenda and to promote women's inclusion on their peacemaking efforts, including when assigned as a guarantor country for a peace process.

24. The United Nations is using its advocacy, support and convening roles to promote targeted measures to advance women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes. In 2023, the United Nations led or co-led four active processes, namely the Geneva International Discussions and the peace processes relating to Libya, the Sudan and Yemen. The United Nations also supported active peace processes in Colombia and the constitutional review process

<sup>26</sup> All numbers provided here are from the first version of the 2023 Women in Peace Processes Monitor data. Updated data and analysis will be made available on a designated forthcoming web page.

<sup>27</sup> Laura Wise, "Gender references in peace agreements in 2023", Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, May 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Joakim Kreutz and Magda Lorena Cárdenas, "The women and men that make peace: introducing Mediating Individuals (M-Ind) dataset", *Journal of Peace Research* (2024).

in South Sudan. Across these processes, women represented, on average, 19 per cent of negotiators. In Libya and Yemen, the negotiating parties' delegations did not include women. In one of the co-led processes, the Geneva International Discussions, the United Nations lead mediator was a woman. Furthermore, women accounted for 40 per cent of staff in United Nations mediation support teams in the four processes led or co-led by the United Nations. In all processes, women civil society organizations were consulted by the United Nations mediators and gender expertise was provided.

25. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of women remains the norm. Despite repeated efforts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to encourage the inclusion of women, no women were part of parties' delegations in the meetings of the Supervisory Committee for the Implementation of the Stockholm Agreement on Detainees held in March and June 2023. Furthermore, no women were part of the 28-person negotiation teams, and the agreement resulted in the release of 973 detainees, only one of whom was a woman. In the Sudan, women remained excluded from the diplomatic initiatives launched in response to the outbreak of the conflict in the Sudan, convened at the regional and international levels in 2023, including in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Even before the war in Gaza, women had been long excluded from political negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, including from the ceasefire talks that started following the attack on 7 October 2023.

26. Despite such challenges, the United Nations is supporting long-term engagement with political and civil society women leaders to open space for peacemaking. In the Syrian Arab Republic, women continued to engage with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, including through the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and Civil Society Support Room mechanisms. In Lebanon, 26 women leaders from across the political spectrum meet regularly as part of an unofficial political dialogue convened by UN-Women to advance reconciliation and increase trust. In Afghanistan, the United Nations has facilitated regular meetings of women from inside and outside of the country with key stakeholders, but more must be done by all actors to insist on women's rights and their participation in public life, including in any peace or political processes going forward. In Libya, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya launched a plan on inclusive mediation and identified options for strengthening women's participation in the Libyan electoral process, while protecting their safety. In the Sudan, the United Nations and partners have supported the establishment of a Peace for Sudan Platform comprising women from different regions, age groups and ethnic backgrounds who actively advocate peace and the inclusion of women in all peace processes. In Western Sahara, during his visit to Laayoune and Dakhla in September 2023, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General met with civil society organizations and women's groups, an engagement that he insisted upon, in keeping with United Nations principles.

27. Policy decisions must be built on priorities and recommendations put forward by women civil society actors themselves, including women peacebuilders, women mediator networks and young women's organizations that are active at the local level. The number of women mediator networks continue to grow, including at the national and local levels: nearly every region and subregion has created women mediator networks in recent years and many countries have established local ones. In Kenya, the representation of women in county peace committees increased to 34 per cent last year, compared with 14 per cent a decade ago. In Yemen, the Office of the Special Envoy, in partnership with UN-Women, organized a consultation series on a bottom-up vision for inclusive peace to prioritize the voices of local Yemeni women and men.

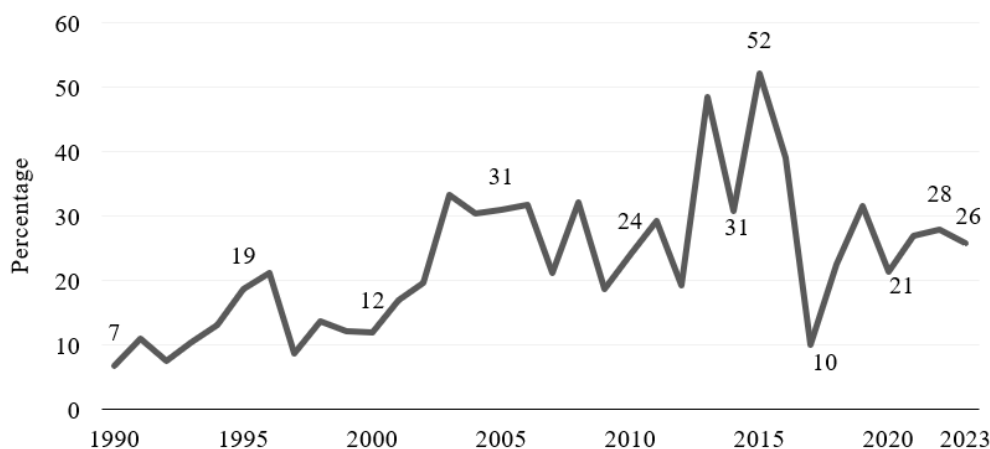
28. Such achievements notwithstanding, many challenges persist and women's organizations working for peace have struggled to find resources. Good practices can be distilled from the experience of the rapid response window for women's participation in peace processes and peace agreements of the Women's Peace and

Humanitarian Fund. Since its inception in 2021, the rapid response window has supported the participation of 1,097 women, including young women,<sup>29</sup> in formal track 1 and track 2 peace negotiations in 28 countries and supported the work of 147 civil society organizations.<sup>30</sup>

29. The rise in the number of conflicts worldwide has not been followed by a similar rise in the number of peace agreements. Multiple active conflicts in 2023 have remained unresolved – such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and in Gaza – and have contributed to the devastating harm experienced by women and girls, and by civilians at large. Out of 31 agreements reached in 2023, only 8 (26 per cent) included explicit references to women, girls, gender or sexual violence, a slight drop from 28 per cent in 2022 (see figure IV).<sup>31</sup> The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) had contributed significantly to ensuring women’s participation in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, signed in 2015. Following the closure of MINUSMA, there were increased clashes between northern armed groups signatory to the Peace Agreement and the Malian Defence and Security Forces and, in January 2024, the transitional Government announced the end of the Peace Agreement, which may lead to significant risks for the women and peace and security agenda and for gender equality.

Figure IV

**Percentage of peace agreements with provisions referring to women, girls and gender, 1990–2023**



Source: PA-X Peace Agreement Database, version 8. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, University of Edinburgh (accessed June 2024).

Note: Data analysed include inter-State and intra-State peace agreements, except for local peace agreements.

30. Consistent support for the implementation of peace agreements, including gender-specific provisions, and the inclusion of women in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, are essential to the success of such measures. In Colombia, women’s organizations in all their diversity and those led by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons are actively engaged in peace consolidation efforts, including under the national policy of total peace. These efforts have shaped analysis and high-level advocacy and led to the inclusion of women ex-combatants in the new

<sup>29</sup> Source reports on key impacts of the rapid response window (2021–2023).

<sup>30</sup> As of 1 July 2024.

<sup>31</sup> This excludes local agreements, classified as intrastate/local in PA-X. See Wise, “Gender references in peace agreements”.

action plan to implement the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, and the incorporation of specific gender indicators and a feminist perspective in the public policy for the dismantling of criminal organizations and in the work of the National Commission on Security Guarantees. Following the inclusion of a 35 per cent gender quota in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, more women have recently been appointed to positions within transitional bodies, though the number of women appointed do not always meet the quota: women now make up 22 per cent of the National Elections Commission, 32 per cent of the National Constitutional Review Committee, and 40 per cent of the Political Parties Council. Efforts to reach the agreed quotas on these and other bodies in South Sudan remain ongoing, while the women of South Sudan demand parity.<sup>32</sup>

31. Much more can and must be done to coordinate principled action on women's meaningful participation in peace processes, including the adoption of minimum requirements and the monitoring of results. Concrete recommendations for accelerating progress were included in the previous report of the Secretary-General (see [S/2023/725](#), para. 105). In 2023, the United Nations committed to advocating and supporting an initial minimum target that one third of participants in mediation and peace processes be women, while continuing to aim for an increase towards parity in political and electoral processes, among other recommendations. A similar commitment has been put forward by the African Union to develop a gender equality policy for all mediation processes led and co-led by the African Union.

## **B. Promoting gender equality and women and peace and security in United Nations peacekeeping through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative**

32. Peacekeeping is a key tool available to the United Nations in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. For United Nations peacekeeping, women's full involvement is a political and strategic imperative and is instrumental in achieving durable results in the host countries in which peacekeepers serve. This commitment is shared by many of the countries that support United Nations peacekeeping. At the Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting held in Ghana in December 2023, 65 of the pledges made by Member States included commitments on women and peace and security that covered several areas: meeting targets of the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028; conducting barrier assessments on the recruitment, retention and deployment of women by the security sector; training on gender-responsive leadership; and funding for projects on women and peace and security.

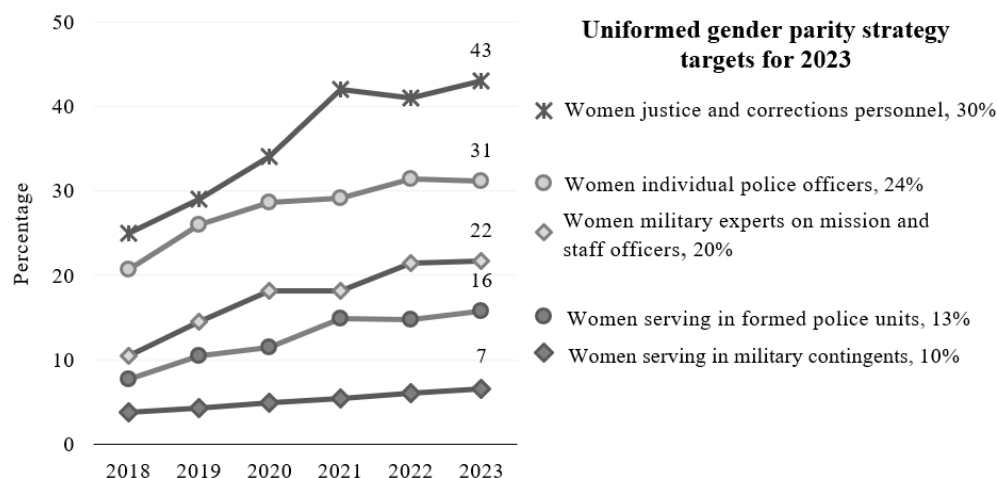
33. Women's increased representation has been key in supporting mandate delivery, including by building trust with host communities, strengthening intelligence gathering, and promoting gender parity in national security services. In the Central African Republic, the average percentage of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) patrols with the presence of women increased from 32 per cent in 2022 to 46 per cent in 2023, and the mission's female correction officers helped establish the first all-women rapid intervention team in the country's prison service. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, engagement teams comprising at least 50 per cent women significantly enhanced situation analyses and threat mitigation through the integration of a gender perspective, conducting long-range patrols to remote areas.

<sup>32</sup> UN-Women, *South Sudan Women's Charter: A Charter of Women's Demands in the Permanent Constitution* (2024).

34. The increase in women's representation in peacekeeping missions has been made possible through many efforts by the United Nations and troop- and police-contributing countries, including the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, in pursuit of the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028. The Department of Peace Operations continued to strengthen targeted outreach and recruitment initiatives. As a result, the representation of women in most categories of uniformed personnel has doubled in the past five years, surpassing the targets established for 2023. For example, the corrections officer recruitment exercise in 2023 doubled the number of rostered women corrections officers ready for deployment from 32 to 64. In addition, several missions are working to create more enabling environments, including by providing gender-sensitive accommodation, sanitation and welfare facilities to improve women's living and working conditions in the field. Nevertheless, the percentage of women among troops, which constitute the bulk of peacekeeping deployments, has only inched up from 4 per cent to 7 per cent in recent years (see figure V).<sup>33</sup>

Figure V

**Proportion of women in military and police personnel by type of position, and justice and corrections government-provided personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2018–2023**



Source: Department of Peace Operations, data accessed June 2024.

Note: Data reflect annual averages.

35. Peacekeeping missions have continued to take action to deliver on the women and peace and security mandates. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) promoted positive masculinities through community champions, role models and radio broadcasts, helped to protect and relocate women human rights defenders, facilitated women's representation in local community dialogues related to the Nairobi process, achieving participation of women as high as 30 per cent and 40 per cent in several localities, conducted patrols in high-risk areas in Goma to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence, and continued to deploy its Prosecution Support Cells to advance gender justice. In 2023, 57 per cent of the cases supported by the cells were related to conflict-related sexual violence, contributing to the conviction of dozens of members of armed groups and State security forces. In Abyei, the mission's advocacy efforts facilitated the appointment of two women to ministerial positions in the local administration,

<sup>33</sup> This category is mainly made up of infantry battalions, in which women are the most underrepresented or from which they are even excluded in troop-contributing countries.

increasing women's representation to 22 per cent. In the Central African Republic, MINUSCA has helped to reduce the number of revenge cases involving accusations of witchcraft and helped to establish 12 circles of peace made up of local women leaders and mediators working to advance social cohesion in their communities. In South Sudan, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) directly assisted hundreds of women released from abduction and children born of rape and deployed mobile courts, resulting in convictions for cases of gender-based violence in places where no statutory courts had heard cases in many years. In Cyprus, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) facilitated 107 intercommunal initiatives and events with women's groups from both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities to support trust-building and women's participation in the peace process. For many people, these initiatives were the first contact with people from the other community.

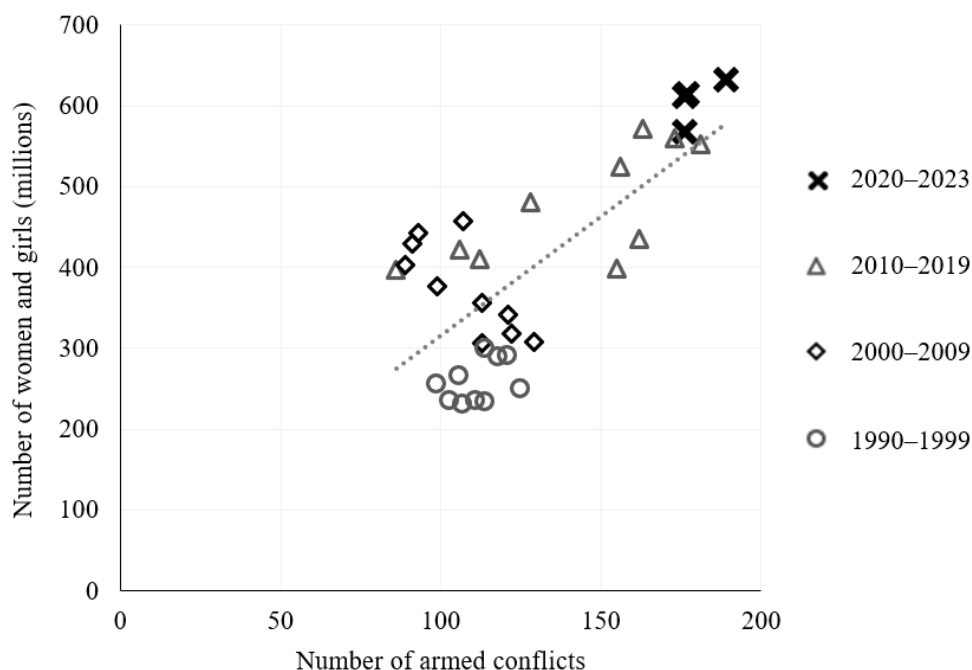
36. Before the closure of MINUSMA at the end of 2023, the Mission was not only instrumental in increasing women's participation in the committees that were monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement, but also facilitated women's involvement in the national dialogue. Further, MINUSMA contributed to increases in women's representation in the National Assembly, among representatives elected in 2020, and in the transitional assembly established following the coup d'état. Given the limited time afforded to close the mission, no projects on women and peace and security, or gender advisers or officers, were transferred to State authorities or to the United Nations country team.

37. As illustrated above, situations in which United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions leave with limited time for a planned and resourced transition can jeopardize hard-won peace gains, lead to the loss of important contributions to gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda, and can leave women and girls in grave danger owing to a lack of protection; this was also the case with the closure of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The Security Council, in several of its resolutions, has called for comprehensive gender analysis and technical gender expertise throughout transition processes, but this is rarely put in place in practice. In its resolution [2719 \(2023\)](#) on United Nations financing of African Union-led peace operations, the Security Council emphasized the importance of implementing resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace support operations.

### **C. Protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies**

38. The world is caught in a frightening spiral of conflict, instability and violence. In 2023, more than 170 armed conflicts were recorded, and approximately 612 million women and girls lived within 50 km of these conflicts, 150 per cent more than just a decade ago (see figure VI).

Figure VI  
**Number of armed conflicts and number of women and girls living within 50 km of armed conflict, 1990–2023**



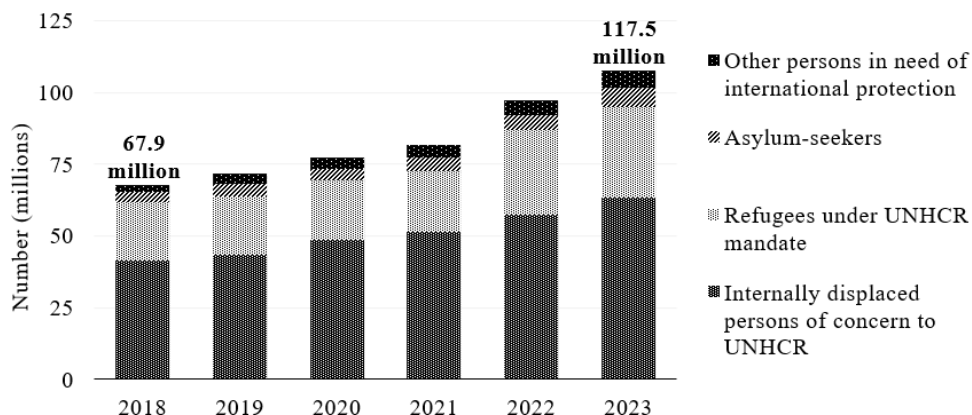
*Source:* Data on the number of women and girls living within 50 km of armed conflict are calculated by the Peace Research Institute Oslo, based on Uppsala Conflict Data Program, georeferenced event data set, global version 24.1; see also data from the Center for International Earth Science Information Network, gridded population of the world v.4.11 (2018). Data on armed conflict come from Uppsala Conflict Data Program, available at <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>, accessed June 2024.

39. The impact on civilians is devastating. In conflict situations, the United Nations registered a dramatic increase in the proportion of women killed and the number of women and girls affected by sexual violence.<sup>34</sup> In addition, at the end of 2023, an estimated 117.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced owing to persecution, conflict and violence (see figure VII), a figure that has risen by 70 per cent since 2018. Half of the forcibly displaced population are women and girls, and 1 in 4 displaced persons are children under the age of 12.<sup>35</sup> For example, in the Sudan, 6.1 million people, 53 per cent of whom are women and girls, were newly displaced in 2023. In 2023, nearly 500,000 Afghan nationals in Pakistan, of whom approximately 49 per cent are women and girls, returned to Afghanistan, many returning in poor health and having suffered significant adverse impacts on their mental health and well-being.

<sup>34</sup> See S/2024/292; S/2024/385; and S/PV.9614.

<sup>35</sup> Based on Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Global trends: forced displacement in 2023”, 2024. Population for which demographic data (sex and age) is available account for 70 per cent of the world’s forcibly displaced people estimated by UNHCR.

Figure VII  
Number of forcibly displaced persons globally, 2018–2023



Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Refugee Data Finder, accessed August 2024.

Abbreviation: UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

40. International human rights law and its special protections for women and children are being ignored. This is evident in several conflict situations. During the attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023, which included the commission of numerous acts of terror, according to Israeli sources, at least 280 women were killed, and 90 women as well as 36 children were taken hostage.<sup>36</sup> Starting on 24 November, as part of an arrangement between Israel and Hamas facilitated by Egypt, Qatar and the United States of America, during a seven-day humanitarian pause, Hamas released 78 hostages – 42 women, 33 children and 3 men. According to the mission report of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, based on the information gathered, “there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred during the 7 October attacks in multiple locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang rape, in at least three locations”. Regarding the hostages taken to Gaza, “the mission team received clear and convincing information that sexual violence, including rape, sexualized torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment occurred against some women and children during their time in captivity and has reasonable grounds to believe that this violence may be ongoing”.<sup>37</sup> According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, as of 26 August 2024, 40,435 Palestinians, the majority of whom are children and women, were killed in the war that ensued. At least 92,534 Palestinians have been injured and thousands more are missing, likely trapped or dead under the rubble. Overall, the war has taken an especially cruel toll on women. Before 7 October, 14 per cent of the civilians who had been killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory over the previous 15 years were women and girls.<sup>38</sup> Since then, nearly two thirds of the fatalities in Gaza reported by the Ministry of Health are women and children. In addition, more than 3,000 women have become widows and new heads of households, struggling to protect their families while dealing with profound trauma and grief.<sup>39</sup>

41. The war in Gaza has caused significant violations of reproductive health and rights, including reproductive violence, which are prohibited in international humanitarian law. An estimated 52,000 pregnant women have been caught in the war, with an estimated 180 deliveries every day, most of them without access to

<sup>36</sup> See [A/HRC/56/26](#).

<sup>37</sup> See [S/2024/217](#) and [S/2024/292](#).

<sup>38</sup> Calculation based on United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Casualties database, available at [www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties).

<sup>39</sup> UN-Women, “Facts and figures: women and girls during the war in Gaza”, 16 April 2024.



anaesthetics for caesarean sections and without water, sanitation, nutrition or postpartum care, as hospitals and maternity clinics are being destroyed all around them. Only three overwhelmed maternity hospitals remain.

42. The absence of essential medical services constitutes life-threatening risks for millions of women in conflict countries. Data show that 61 per cent of preventable maternal mortality occur in 35 crisis-affected countries, which amounts to 500 deaths per day.<sup>40</sup> In the Sudan, which already had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world before the outbreak of the armed conflict in April 2023, 2.64 million women and girls of reproductive age are now in need of urgent assistance, including 260,000 pregnant women. Amid reports of widespread sexual violence,<sup>41</sup> most victims were unable to access the necessary medical care during the first 72 hours after being raped, including post-exposure prophylaxis or emergency contraception, and the United Nations received reports of victims of rape having been denied an abortion because it was outside of the timeline allowed for by law. In Yemen, women have limited or no access to reproductive health services, including antenatal care, safe delivery, postnatal care, family planning and emergency obstetric and newborn care. The limited reproductive health and postnatal care previously available in Yemen further declined by 35 and 22 per cent, respectively, in the first half of 2023.<sup>42</sup> These circumstances demonstrate why attention to this issue is so urgent, and gaps in accountability for reproductive violence so grievous.

43. Perpetrators of sexual violence still largely enjoy impunity. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than 123,000 cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2023, a 300 per cent increase in only three years. Displaced women and girls in and around Goma are forced to engage in survival sex, including in at least 1,063 brothels.<sup>43</sup> In Haiti, Médecins sans frontières alone supported more than 3,700 survivors of sexual violence and intimate partner violence in 2023, a 43 per cent increase from the number of survivors it had supported in the previous year. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia concluded that more than 10,000 survivors of sexual violence had sought healthcare in one-stop centres in Tigray alone between November 2020 and June 2023.

44. Women and girls in conflict-affected countries are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimated that more than 1 in every 4 women and girls globally experienced moderate or severe food insecurity. In conflict-affected settings, 1 in 2 women and girls face moderate or severe food insecurity. In the Sudan, 5,500 pregnant women and 7,000 new mothers may die in the coming months from starvation, as warring parties deliberately obstruct food aid.<sup>44</sup> In Gaza, nearly 9 in 10 women find it harder to access food than men, and 84 per cent report that their family eats half or less of the food they ate before the war began, with mothers often skipping meals to feed their children.<sup>45</sup> Ninety-two per cent of women-headed households in displacement camps in the Syrian Arab Republic report that they cannot meet the basic needs of their families and worry about surviving the winter without being able to afford fuel or clothes to keep their children warm. As hunger rises, women and girls are forced to

<sup>40</sup> *State of the World Population 2024: Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope – Ending Inequalities in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* (United Nations publication, 2024).

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Sudan: UN leaders call for urgent action against scourge of sexual violence amid ongoing conflict”, 25 April 2024.

<sup>42</sup> See S/2024/269. See also <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-needs-overview-2024-january-2024-enar>.

<sup>43</sup> See S/PV.9615.

<sup>44</sup> Save the Children, “Sudan: nearly 230,000 children and new mothers likely to die from hunger without critical action”, 13 March 2024.

<sup>45</sup> UN News, “Roughly 9,000 women killed so far in Gaza war: UN Women”, 2 March 2024.

adopt harmful coping strategies, including by eating last and least in the household, engaging in transactional sex, and through early and/or forced and child marriage.

45. Defending the rights of women and girls is a global responsibility. In Afghanistan, where women and girls over the age of 12 have been denied their right to education for three years, the restrictions on women's rights have been expanded and are the focus of over 90 edicts issued by the Taliban since they took power.<sup>46</sup> In June 2024, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan called for the recognition of gender apartheid and its codification as a crime against humanity and recommended that Member States and the international community support efforts to bring Afghanistan before the International Court of Justice for violations of international human rights treaties to which it is a party.<sup>47</sup> In surveys conducted by UN-Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA),<sup>48</sup> only 1 per cent of Afghan women indicated they had good or full influence on decision-making at the community level, and their influence inside their households has plummeted by nearly 60 per cent over the past year. In those surveys, 82 per cent of women surveyed scored their mental health as bad or very bad, and 8 per cent reported knowing at least one woman or girl who had attempted suicide since August 2021. The oppression of Afghan women is severe and interactions among women have become very infrequent: 18 per cent reported that they had not met with women outside their immediate family in the previous three months.

46. In several countries, including Iraq, Libya and Yemen, local or national authorities have issued bans against the term gender and restricted or persecuted the activities of those working on gender equality or women's rights. This crackdown on gender-related work is accompanied by increasing attacks against women human rights defenders, as well as women journalists and artists in conflict-affected settings. According to Front Line Defenders, the two most targeted areas of human rights defence were women's rights and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, followed by human rights movements and Indigenous Peoples' rights.<sup>49</sup> In Myanmar, more than 5,000 women have reportedly been arrested since the military takeover in February 2021, and hundreds of women human rights defenders have reportedly left Myanmar, mainly for neighbouring countries, often without any official documents and at risk of deportation.

47. Several Member States, regional organizations such as the European Union, and the United Nations are taking stronger measures to respond to attacks and reprisals against women human rights defenders. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has supported 582 women human rights defenders and their 1,647 dependants across 24 crisis-affected countries since 2022, with more than half of them supported with livelihood and relocation costs. In a recent survey, while 80 per cent of them reported reduced risks as a result of accessing safety nets from the fund, 45 per cent of them highlighted that new threats or forms of harassment and intimidation have emerged since they had received support from the Fund. In another survey sent by UN-Women to the 45 women from civil society who briefed the Security Council in 2023, 5 of the 23 who responded reported having been targeted as a consequence of their briefing.

48. The backlash against women's human rights and gender-related activities, including restrictions on women's freedom of movement, is also severely affecting the delivery of humanitarian aid in many contexts, especially in Afghanistan and

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<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.usip.org/tracking-talibans-Mistreatment-women>.

<sup>47</sup> See [A/HRC/53/21](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/2024/6/18/a/hrc/53/21).

<sup>48</sup> See International Organization on Migration, "Situation of Afghan women", Quarterly Women's Consultation, available at <https://afghanistan.iom.int/situation-afghan-women-quarterly-womens-consultation>.

<sup>49</sup> Front Line Defenders, *Front Line Defenders: Global Analysis 2023/24* (2023).

Yemen. The humanitarian community continues negotiations to reinforce and expand local agreements with the de facto authorities on exemptions to the ban on women working in non-governmental organizations or the United Nations, but humanitarian partners reported 1,775 incidents relating to access in 2023.<sup>50</sup> In Yemen, restrictions are forcing women to work only in one location and not travel, and many are leaving their jobs as a result.

49. Principled humanitarian delivery is not possible without respecting women's human rights and women's participation. Despite challenges, progress continued on ensuring crisis-affected women's participation and leadership in humanitarian decision-making. In 10 different contexts, humanitarian country teams reported having at least one local women-led organization as a member, or a women's advisory group comprising representatives of civil society, directly advising the humanitarian country team.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, 13 out of 19 country-based pooled funds included representatives of local women's organizations in their respective advisory boards. In 2023, 79 per cent of humanitarian response plans integrated provisions to implement the three cross-cutting areas of gender equality priorities: enabling economic empowerment, promoting sexual and reproductive health and eliminating gender-based violence. Women's participation is necessary even in the most challenging contexts. In Gaza, the Mine Action Service ensured that over 55 per cent of counsellors providing explosive ordnance risk education in 2023 were women.

50. The international community's ability to reach women and girls with humanitarian aid is, however, undercut by reductions in funding. For example, underfunding of UNHCR work to respond to gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo means that the number of women and girls benefiting from services was estimated to decrease from 195,000 to 120,000. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR had to close dozens of safe spaces for women and girls in the north-west because of unmet funding requirements. The low levels of funding of the Syrian response plan translate into 2.3 million women of reproductive age losing access to sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal healthcare, and 4.4 million women and girls not receiving urgently needed nutritional assistance. In the Central African Republic, inadequate funding for gender-based violence services meant that only 29 per cent of rape survivors were able to access medical care within 72 hours.

#### **D. Disarmament and arms control, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

51. Driven by the deteriorating security environment and escalating geopolitical tensions, including threats regarding the use of nuclear weapons, and growing investments in the development of emerging technologies, 2023 saw global military expenditures increase for the ninth consecutive year, to reach an all-time high of \$2.44 trillion,<sup>52</sup> which represents an increase of 6.8 per cent in real terms from 2022. Continued increases in military spending risk limiting further the resources made available for investments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including for Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality. Surging military spending is not in line with Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which envisages promoting the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. If not halted, the spread of militarization, weapons and ammunition could lead to an even more dangerous and violent decade, in which civilians continue to bear the brunt of harm.

<sup>50</sup> See [S/2024/196](#).

<sup>51</sup> Women's advisory groups were active in Afghanistan and the Syrian Arab Republic cross-border operation in 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Global military spending surges amid war".

Strengthening and preserving the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is a priority in the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace.

52. The General Assembly's adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management ([A/78/111](#), annex) marked an important step in United Nations disarmament and arms control efforts. Through the framework, States commit to strengthening gender mainstreaming, women's leadership and participation in ammunition management and to improving measures on supply chain transparency when authorizing ammunition transfers, so as to mitigate the risk of diverted ammunition being used to fuel crime and armed violence, including gender-based violence. In some arms control and disarmament forums, State parties have taken a novel approach by appointing gender focal points to support gender mainstreaming in the intergovernmental processes for treaties and key agreements. Such an approach could be replicated across all disarmament and arms control mechanisms.

53. The illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to initiate, exacerbate and sustain armed conflict, pervasive violence and acts of crime and terrorism. Since the publication of the previous report, there has been greater attention focused on the linkages between the availability of weapons and ammunition and the occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence in global discussions, including in the Security Council.<sup>53</sup> In her briefing at the Council's open debate on conflict-related sexual violence in April 2024, Niemat Ahmadi, a Sudanese women human rights defender, noted that without the spread of weapons in violation of the arms embargo, the levels of sexual violence currently seen in the Sudan would have never occurred. This increased attention must now be translated into action, for instance by assessing arms related risks through early-warning mechanisms on conflict-related sexual violence and considering the risk of gender-based violence when making decisions about arms transfers.<sup>54</sup> Such measures also require the enforcement of arms embargoes, improved tracing and the upholding of accountability in arms exports with respect to contexts where gender-based violence is prevalent.<sup>55</sup> At the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2024, Member States adopted new measures for gender-responsive policies to prevent the diversion and illicit trade of small arms and light weapons from exacerbating gender-based violence.<sup>56</sup>

54. More can be done at the national level to better align policies on women and peace and security and on arms control. At present, less than one quarter of the 110 national action plans on women and peace and security include references to disarmament and arms control actions in the monitoring framework.<sup>57</sup>

55. Despite repeated calls for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making, and in the design and implementation of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts, less than one third of voices heard in arms control and disarmament forums are those of women, who remain severely underrepresented in forums not connected to gender issues. The challenge appears to be greater at the national and regional levels than at multilateral levels.

<sup>53</sup> This was raised in the Security Council's deliberations on small arms in December 2023 (see [S/2023/823](#), and Security Council signatories of the shared commitments on women, peace, and Security, joint statement on the open debate on small arms, New York, 2015), and on conflict-related sexual violence in April 2024 (see [S/2024/292](#) and [S/2024/311](#)).

<sup>54</sup> Hana Salama, "Addressing weapons in conflict related sexual violence: the arms control and disarmament toolbox", United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Article 7 (4) of the Arms Trade Treaty obliges exporting State parties to take into account the risk of gender-based violence and violence against women and children in their arms export risk assessments.

<sup>56</sup> See [A/CONF.192/2024/RC/3](#).

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs analysis.

56. There are limited funding opportunities for research and outreach on gender and disarmament issues and programming. For instance, between 2021 and 2023, expenditures by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) gender and disarmament programme represented, on average, 5 per cent of the Institute's total expenditures. In order to support national implementation efforts on the reduction of armed violence and the promotion of arms control with a gender perspective, the Saving Lives Entity fund (SALIENT), a United Nations funding facility, continued to channel at least 30 per cent of its programme funds to gender-related activities in 2023.

57. Effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community violence reduction programmes can be crucial elements for wider stabilization and recovery and for preventing the reoccurrence of conflict-related sexual violence. Last year, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, comprising 27 United Nations system entities, adopted a new module on gender, women and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as part of the revised Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards. Progress on the implementation of the module will be crucial, as women are often excluded from peace agreements provisions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. A recent study showed that only 11 of 128 such provisions contained references to women associated with armed groups.<sup>58</sup>

58. Examples from around the world show the relevance of this area of work. In South Sudan, UNMISS ensured that young women made up 35 per cent of participants in a pilot project in Wau to help young ex-combatants reintegrate into civilian life. In Cameroon, UN-Women and IOM are supporting a platform of women's organizations, including through small grants to local women's groups, to help the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration committee in the Far North Region to implement the country's first strategy on gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In Mozambique, more than 2,000 women have been demobilized recently, although only a small percentage of them have been connected to reintegration opportunities or become pension recipients. In the Central African Republic, more than 1,000 ex-combatants have completed their socioeconomic reintegration process since July 2022, funded by the World Bank, but only 4.5 per cent of them were women.<sup>59</sup>

## **E. Political participation and representation**

59. More than 60 countries are expected to hold national elections in 2024, with around one fifth of them expected to take place in countries mentioned in the present report. The results of elections held in countries with large populations, large economies and geopolitical relevance are expected to have global implications, with the increasing threat of political extremism and authoritarianism. Election results may influence international relations, security alliances, economic strategies and climate change – all of which are threatening already to slow progress towards gender equality. Countries will also be put to the test on commitments to women's right to participate, vote, run for and hold office on an equal footing.

60. Global data show a persistent pattern of underrepresentation of women in public life and decision-making due to gender-based discrimination in all spheres of life. As of January 2024, a staggering 113 countries worldwide had never had a woman serve as Head of State or Government and only 27 countries were led by a woman.<sup>60</sup> It is estimated that at the current rate, gender parity in the highest positions of power will

<sup>58</sup> Júlia Palik, "Still lacking representation: women and minors in DDR provisions (1975–2021)", conference paper presented at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, 28 February 2023.

<sup>59</sup> See [S/2023/769](#).

<sup>60</sup> UN-Women, "Women political leaders 2024", 2024.

not be reached for another 130 years.<sup>61</sup> Women represent 23.3 per cent of cabinet members heading ministries worldwide in 2024 – a less than 0.5 percentage point increase from 2023, and the share is 19 per cent in conflict-affected countries.<sup>62</sup> The lower representation of women in Government in conflict-affected countries is more pronounced in certain key ministries, such as foreign affairs (14 per cent) or defence (3 per cent). Since 2020, several countries have seen unconstitutional changes of government, which have had disastrous effects on gender equality, women’s rights and their participation in public life.

61. The global proportion of women in parliament has not passed 27 per cent,<sup>63</sup> dropping to 21 per cent in conflict-affected countries.<sup>64</sup> Women’s representation in local government worldwide stands at 35.5 per cent of elected seats, and this proportion drops to just 20 per cent in conflict-affected countries.<sup>65</sup> Research shows that 22 conflict-affected countries with legislated gender quotas and relevant data have higher levels of women’s parliamentary representation, averaging 25 per cent, compared with an average of only 15 per cent in 13 countries without quotas and with data on women’s representation. The same is true at the local level, where 15 countries with gender quotas have women elected to 22 per cent of local government roles, compared with 17.5 per cent in six countries without such quotas.<sup>66</sup> Quotas not only increase women’s representation but also normalize their participation in decision-making and enhance their visibility. The greater involvement of women can significantly shape law and policymaking, as seen in Sierra Leone, where the rise in women’s parliamentary representation in 2023 contributed to the prohibition of child marriage in 2024.

62. To promote gender parity in decision-making, the United Nations continues to provide electoral assistance, upon request or as mandated, and targeted advocacy to partners and electoral stakeholders. For example, in South Sudan, coordinated United Nations programming has contributed to the amendments of the 2012 National Elections Act, enacted in September 2023, which state that 35 per cent of national legislators’ seats are to be filled by women. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a training programme led by UN-Women for aspiring political candidates reached a total of 5,600 women, who enhanced their communications and campaign management skills. Following the elections in that country, the President, Mr. Tshisekedi, appointed Judith Suminwa Tuluka as Prime Minister, the first woman to hold that post. In the Central African Republic, after years of advocacy by women civil society leaders, MINUSCA and UN-Women, the Government issued a decree for the establishment and operationalization of the National Parity Observatory in February 2024. The electoral code introducing a system of alternating lists of candidates (man-woman) for municipal elections entered into force in July 2024.

63. Gender-based violence against women in political and public life remains a real barrier to meaningful participation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the chair of a local branch of the Independent National Electoral Commission was assaulted and stripped naked by several men in a polling station on election day. In Haiti, a woman nominated to the Transitional Presidential Council stepped down because she had been the victim of misogynistic attacks and death threats, and all seven voting members of the Council are now men. Such violence includes violence

<sup>61</sup> See [E/CN.6/2021/3](#).

<sup>62</sup> UN-Women, “Women political leaders 2024”; and UN-Women calculations.

<sup>63</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Women in Parliaments in 2023: The Year in Review* (Geneva, 2024). As of 1 January 2024, it was 26.5 per cent in 2023.

<sup>64</sup> UN-Women calculations.

<sup>65</sup> Data as of 1 January 2023, see UN-Women, Women in Local Government database, available at <https://localgov.unwomen.org/> (accessed on 8 May 2024).

<sup>66</sup> UN-Women calculations. See also, United Nations, Gender Quota Portal, available at <https://genderquota.org/>; and UN-Women, Women in Local Government database.

facilitated by technology<sup>67</sup> and has a serious impact on women’s mental health and their participation in public life.<sup>68</sup> A new report shows that generative artificial intelligence has made things worse, as its proliferation brings with it new harms.<sup>69</sup> Combating these harms requires government regulations, enhanced media and information literacy, and collaboration with artificial intelligence developers, technology companies and civil society.

## F. Economic recovery and access to resources

64. The economic needs and contributions of conflict-affected women are still absent from many peace agreements and immediate and long-term recovery and reconstruction plans. In a recent report by the non-governmental organization CARE International, surveying almost 14,000 women in 15 conflict-affected countries, livelihood assistance was identified as the most urgent need and priority, a finding that is consistent with many other reports and evaluations in the past but that has increased in recent years. For example, the proportion of women in the Niger citing income or livelihood as their most urgent personal need surged from 43 per cent in 2020 to over 87 per cent in 2023,<sup>70</sup> following the unconstitutional change of government, including as a result of the closure of borders, which had an impact on women-led cross-border trade.

65. Investing in women’s economic security and opportunities at the time of transition from conflict to peace has been a consistent recommendation, both as a conflict prevention strategy and as an effective relief and recovery intervention. It is also essential as part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Women and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimate that a staggering \$360 billion annual funding shortfall persists for efforts to achieve gender equality in key areas, including for the Goals to end poverty and hunger, and to support more equal participation of women in society by 2030.<sup>71</sup> Yet, few national action plans on women and peace and security have put in place substantive measures for women’s economic security. In the context of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, economic security was the pillar that was least reported on in 2023. In many cases, interventions in this area are too small in scale at best, and at worst reinforce the very same economic systems that left some of its most productive members behind in the first place.

66. In 2023, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 4.8 million women gained jobs and livelihoods were improved in 42 countries in crisis or post-crisis settings. For example, in Yemen, UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) delivered entrepreneurship and business management training to more than 4,800 small business owners, 43 per cent of whom were women. Iraq has advanced a draft law to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of ILO, on preventing and addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. That step is particularly important, given that women’s participation in the workforce in Iraq is currently only 10.6 per cent, compared with 68 per cent for men. In Colombia, the Government is prioritizing rural women as beneficiaries of an ambitious land reform process and has launched a

<sup>67</sup> UN-Women and World Health Organization, “Technology-facilitated violence against women: taking stock of evidence and data collection”, March 2023.

<sup>68</sup> IPU, “AI-4/5: on violence against women in politics, identify best practice and share it”, 30 November 2023.

<sup>69</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “*Your Opinion Doesn’t Matter, Anyway*”: Exposing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in an Era of Generative AI (Paris, 2023).

<sup>70</sup> Janoch and others, “Women in war”.

<sup>71</sup> UN-Women, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023 (2023). See also <https://unctad.org/sdg-costing/gender-equality>.

review of more than 33,000 development initiatives to prioritize those with the highest impact and those that benefit women. In addition, 77 per cent of women who are accredited former combatants are participating in productive projects (86 per cent when including their relatives). However, more than one third of women former combatants provide unpaid care services, compared with only 2 per cent of men former combatants, which led the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN-Women and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization to initiate a programme on comprehensive caregiving.

67. Care work<sup>72</sup> is often missing from economic recovery strategies in conflict-affected countries, alongside a long list of underutilized interventions by governments, the private sector and international banks and international financial institutions. Such interventions include: more consistent application of gender analysis and gender markers in post-conflict recovery funds and initiatives; greater investments in women’s rights and access to capital and land and property ownership; social protection systems that cover women in the informal sector; experimentation with universal or targeted basic income during and after crises; more comprehensive support to women-owned and women-led social enterprises and businesses; and greater use of cash-based interventions aimed at women in conflict-affected countries.

## **G. Rule of law and women’s access to justice**

68. Effective and inclusive rule of law institutions are foundational to advance gender equality. In order to reinforce this premise, the Secretary-General launched his New Vision for the Rule of Law in 2023, which commits the Organization to supporting Member States in addressing systemic and persistent barriers, such as gender stereotyping, discriminatory laws, intersecting or compounded discrimination, and discriminatory procedural and evidentiary requirements and practices.

69. Women play a critical role in shaping rule of law institutions. Ending gender-based discriminatory laws, for example, requires an intergenerational approach involving young women in local and national dialogues on institutional and legal reforms, particularly for those laws that are hampering their access to justice. Nevertheless, unequal representation of women at the decision-making level persists, including in international justice institutions. In the history of the International Court of Justice, only six women have served as judges, 5 per cent of the Court’s members since 1945 (6 women, 115 men).

70. During the reporting period, there was noteworthy progress towards accountability for gender-based violence in some country-specific situations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the crime of forced pregnancy was successfully tried by a national court for the first time anywhere in the world, resulting in the conviction for crimes against humanity of a former faction leader of the Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki group in May 2023, and his sentencing to life imprisonment. In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace formally opened Macro Case 11 in September 2023 to investigate gender-based violence, sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes committed on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia. In the Central African Republic, in July 2023, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Criminal Court upheld the 2022 conviction of a commander of the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation for rape perpetrated by his subordinates, on the basis of command responsibility.

71. At the international level, in February 2024, the International Criminal Court delivered an order on reparations to victims in the case against Dominic Ongwen for

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, “Transforming care systems in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Our Common Agenda”, UN System Policy Paper, 2024.



crimes committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which may reach nearly 50,000 individuals, including victims of sexual and gender-based crimes and children born of those crimes.<sup>73</sup> In December 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court revised its Policy on Gender-based Crimes, making important adjustments, including embedding a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach in the Office's work.

72. The revised guidance note of the Secretary-General on transitional justice includes gender-responsiveness as one of its five key features. There is increasing attention to sexual orientation and gender identity in United Nations human rights investigations: in 2018, only 2 out of 6 such investigations addressed violations relating to these issues, compared with 9 out of 10 investigations in 2023.

73. In 2023, 8 out of 41 conflict-affected countries and territories undertook reforms towards effective, accessible and gender-responsive criminal justice systems, often with support from the United Nations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 31 per cent of the 2,500 new magistrates nominated by the President in 2023 were women. The Steering Committee of the new Authority for the Management of Reparations for Victims of Crises in Mali includes three women among its seven members. In response to a letter from many civil society organizations concerned about the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) until September 2024 only and the consequences in terms of prospects of ensuring justice for atrocities committed against women and girls in Iraq, the Prime Minister of Iraq announced that the Government is preparing legislation for the prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>74</sup>

## H. Security sector reform and women's participation in national security institutions

74. As the size of security sectors expands, the need for gender-responsive reform becomes more urgent. Human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence committed by security forces, fuel grievances, undermine people's trust in the State, contribute to the erosion of the social contract and are drivers of conflict. The United Nations continued to support Member States in implementing gender-responsive security sector reforms, including by: assessing the status of women in the defence sector; undertaking barrier assessments to identify obstacles to women's participation in national security sectors; establishing oversight and vetting mechanisms to prevent perpetrators of sexual violence from joining the security sector and to address any form of abuse against women and girls by security forces; and promoting the inclusion of women in the negotiations on security provisions of peace agreements, in national security bodies responsible for the development of national security policies and operations, and in parliamentary oversight mechanisms. Such efforts notwithstanding, significant cultural, policy, legal and institutional barriers to women's participation persist, including unequal conditions of employment for women and their being subjected to sexual harassment and abuse.

75. Some conflict-affected countries are making efforts in these areas. For example, UN-Women and MONUSCO have been supporting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in efforts to recruit more women for the armed forces and the national police, which target 10 per cent and 20 per cent of women among their personnel, respectively, by 2025; current levels are at 9.8 per cent (armed forces) and

<sup>73</sup> International Criminal Court, Trial Chamber IX, *The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case No. ICC-02/04-01/15, Reparations Order, 28 February 2024.

<sup>74</sup> See [S/2024/373](#).

11 per cent (police forces). In South Sudan, support provided by UNMISS led to the adoption in 2023 by the Military Justice Department of legally binding standing orders to promote accountability for serious crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence. In the Western Balkans, UNDP supported gender equality and parity initiatives in the defence sector that included coaching programmes for high-ranking officers and military leaders on how to integrate a gender perspective, and changes in military education and training material, thereby contributing to a steady increase in the share of women in uniform. In Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces worked on increasing the integration and retention of women within its ranks and endorsed a gender mainstreaming strategy to guide its commanders and personnel on achieving gender equality. In Georgia, similar efforts contributed to historic milestones in the appointment of women to higher roles within the Georgian Defence Forces. In the Central African Republic, women make up 20 per cent of the national security sector reform coordination body. In a concerning development, the Myanmar armed forces began enacting mandatory conscription based on a 2010 People's Military Service Law that also encompasses women between the ages of 18 and 27, or up to the age of 35 for women doctors, nurses or engineers, except for married women and women with children. In order to avoid conscription, some young women have chosen to marry against their wishes or fled across the border or to areas controlled by the armed groups fighting against the military.

## I. Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism

76. Effectively preventing and countering terrorism requires an understanding of how structural gender inequalities can create the conditions for violent extremism, and it requires recognizing how the ideology, strategy and funding of terrorist groups are shaped by misogyny, militarized masculinities and the manipulation of gender roles and norms, and how women and girls are distinctly affected both by the violence carried out by terrorist groups and the national security measures and counter-terrorism legislation enacted to address that violence. Despite a decade of normative and policy growth in this area, however, most national counter-terrorism efforts still ignore these issues. In 2023, the Office of Counter-Terrorism completed an assessment of national centres for counter-terrorism and found limited awareness of the relevant normative frameworks and virtually no integration into policy and practice at the most operational levels. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate documented continued impunity for sexual and gender-based violence linked to terrorism and published a legal analysis of potential avenues for more effective investigation and prosecution of such crimes under different legal frameworks.<sup>75</sup> With the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in December 2023, Nigerian prosecutorial authorities for the first time successfully charged a member of a terrorist group for alleged acts of sexual and gender-based violence as acts of terrorism.<sup>76</sup> The Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities has not sanctioned individuals or entities for their gross violations of women's rights, including the use of sexual violence or sexual slavery, and none of the listings of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) concerning Al-Shabaab since 2014 mention sexual violence or women's rights.

77. In some cases, the rights of women and girls and the organizations and activists that defend them are also violated by the legislation and security apparatus set up to counter terrorism. According to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and

<sup>75</sup> United Nations, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, *Towards Meaningful Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Linked to Terrorism* (2023).

<sup>76</sup> See <https://www.icct.nl/publication/tide-turns-prosecution-sgbv-crimes-terrorist-offence-nigeria>.

protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 57.6 per cent of the cases of undue regulation and registration of civil society reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women pertained to restrictions based on countering terrorism. In some cases, this legislation enacts procedurally administrative requirements that may appear to be neutral or affect all civil society actors equally, but in practice have a disproportionate impact on small grass-roots organizations, and especially on women-led groups. Limitations on foreign funding, for example, can affect local organizations working on sexual and reproductive health or on sexual orientation and gender identity.

78. The United Nations continues to engage with national authorities to ensure that human rights and gender equality norms are taken into account in preventing and countering terrorism. For example, UN-Women has partnered with the National Counter-Terrorism Centre in Kenya to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism, including in online spaces. In Iraq, a collaboration between IOM and the Government has yielded results: women's representation in national and district-level committees to prevent violent extremism increased to 25 per cent in 2023, and the seven local action plans launched in 2023 included a pillar on gender mainstreaming. In order to support the implementation of those plans, IOM established a fund in 2022 that has since supported 50 projects led by civil society, one third of which are specifically dedicated to initiatives led by or focused on women, with most remaining projects ensuring that between 35 and 50 per cent of beneficiaries were women.

79. Funding to implement the policy recommendations and directives that have been developed over the past decade remains insufficient, and the United Nations has yet to adopt specific procedures to allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of all funds for counter-terrorism efforts to support gender equality, as originally recommended by the Secretary-General in 2015.

## J. Climate change and its peace and security implications

80. In 2023, significant milestones were reached in recognizing linkages between climate change, fragility and conflict. At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a declaration on climate, relief, recovery and peace was endorsed by 91 countries, in which they acknowledged the compounded impact of climate change, conflict and humanitarian crises on vulnerable communities.<sup>77</sup> As gender equality correlates with both stronger climate resilience and peace outcomes,<sup>78</sup> the declaration underscores the importance of gender-responsive risk assessments and increased financial resources for adaptation, emphasizing the role of women's leadership in addressing the challenges faced by communities. Targeted action and support are critical for progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, an analysis by UN-Women reveals that instances of climate finance being committed to activities that address climate, peace and security and gender as a principal objective are still rare. In 2021, such pledges were true of only 56 out of more than 160,000 activities supported through official development assistance (ODA) (0.035 per cent).<sup>79</sup>

81. The establishment of the loss and damage fund constitutes a significant advancement in tackling irreversible climate change impacts in the most vulnerable nations, many of which are also fragile or affected by conflict and, in addition, score

<sup>77</sup> See [www.cop28.com/en/cop28-declaration-on-climate-relief-recovery-and-peace](http://www.cop28.com/en/cop28-declaration-on-climate-relief-recovery-and-peace).

<sup>78</sup> Elena Ortiz and Marisa O. Ensor, "The WPS Index and the gender-climate-security nexus", GIWPS Research Brief, November 2023.

<sup>79</sup> UN-Women, *Climate Finance for Gender Equality and Peace: A Global Analysis* (forthcoming).

low on gender equality.<sup>80</sup> Effective operationalization of the fund requires a gender analysis so as to address both economic and non-economic impacts, such as increases in gender-based violence and unpaid care work following climate shocks.<sup>81</sup> It will also require that gender-specific risks be addressed and obstacles to women's leadership be overcome in both peacebuilding and climate action. In 2023, the Peacebuilding Fund dedicated the global call for proposals of its Gender Promotion Initiative to the themes of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and women's engagement in natural resources management. Some \$30.4 million were allocated to gender equality efforts within climate and peace and security programmes approved by the Fund in 2023.

82. Country and regional-level implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is a proactive measure against climate-related security risks, as evidenced by the integration of relevant considerations into the comprehensive regional prevention and integration strategy for the Horn of Africa. More regional and national action plans on women and peace, and security are integrating climate considerations. Lessons from the national action plans of Finland, the Philippines, Uganda and Viet Nam underscore the importance of local action and Indigenous knowledge in ensuring the effectiveness of measures.<sup>82</sup>

83. Young women are pivotal to addressing the intergenerational challenges and the commitment to enhancing their leadership on climate and peace and security must be supported by resources, including for the safety, mental health and well-being of young climate activists, as well as resources in relation to development opportunities and access to debate and decision-making. Ahead of the Summit of the Future, a forum of young women peacebuilders from Asia and the Pacific was convened by UN-Women; participants underscored the importance of mechanisms that allow young women in communities to contribute their knowledge and experiences directly to security and climate discussions.<sup>83</sup>

84. Women environmental human rights defenders, many of whom are Indigenous women in heavily militarized areas, face a range of threats. Between 2012 and 2022, nearly 2,000 environmental defenders were killed<sup>84</sup> and many have been subjected to silencing tactics including death threats, surveillance, sexual violence or criminalization, all of which highlight the need for their comprehensive protection.

## IV. Action to realize women and peace and security commitments

### A. Planning for action and monitoring results at the national and regional levels

85. Anti-gender and anti-feminist movements are well-organized and have at their disposal considerable financial resources.<sup>85</sup> The backlash against human rights is

<sup>80</sup> See [FCCC/CP/2023/L.1-FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.1](#).

<sup>81</sup> Laura Turquet and others, *Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action* (New York, UN-Women, 2023).

<sup>82</sup> UN-Women, *Study on the Integration of Climate, Peace and Security into the National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace, and Security* (forthcoming).

<sup>83</sup> See <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/events/2024/04/gen-forum-2024-young-leaders-for-women-peace-and-security#event-content>.

<sup>84</sup> Global Witness, *Decade of Defiance: Ten Years of Reporting Land and Environmental Activism Worldwide* (2022).

<sup>85</sup> See [A/HRC/56/51](#); Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsan, *Democratic Backsliding and the Backlash against Women's Rights: Understanding the Current Challenges for Feminist Politics* (New York, UN-Women 2020); and Haley McEwen and Lata Narayanaswamy, "The international anti-gender movement: understanding the rise of anti-gender discourses in the context of development, human rights and social protection", Working Paper, No. 2023-06 (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2023).

gaining traction around the world, both online and in person.<sup>86</sup> Over the past year, the backlash has manifested in multiple ways, including in the repeal of laws advancing gender equality, disregard for gender-specific provisions in peace agreements, new decrees and policy circulars banning the use of gender terminology, heightened insecurity, threats and attacks against women leaders and organizations working on gender equality and on women and peace and security issues, and violence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, as well as fraught negotiations in intergovernmental bodies, where language on gender equality and women's rights, including in relation to conflict and crisis settings, is at continual risk of regression. The latest gender social norms index report found no improvement in biases against women over the past decade.<sup>87</sup> In this context, it is essential that Member States and regional organizations with dedicated policies and plans on women and peace and security actively uphold, advocate and deliver on commitments, especially in conflict and crisis settings.

86. As of June 2024, 110 countries and territories had adopted national action plans on women and peace and security.<sup>88</sup> Since the publishing of the previous report, Greece, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe have adopted their first-ever action plans. In addition, 13 regional and subregional organizations have action plans or strategies. In 2023, UN-Women provided technical and financial support for the development and implementation of more than 40 action plans.

87. Securing dedicated financing remains a challenge for the full implementation of national action plans and only 29 plans (26 per cent), mostly in low-income countries, included a budget at the time of adoption. Some countries apply gender-responsive budgeting, including Georgia, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova and Uganda, all of which have allocated government funds to support the implementation of their action plans. Despite the engagement of various ministries in the development of national action plans, in several settings, coordination and responsibility for the implementation of those plans falls under national machineries for gender equality, which may already be significantly under-resourced. In the 2023–24 national budget for South Sudan, 1 per cent is allocated to the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, to be shared with five other institutions. Several high-income countries report that their funding of national action plans is decentralized across various ministries, departments and agencies with responsibilities for aspects of such plans. There is often insufficient information to track funding allocations and expenditures, however, making it difficult to assess the total amount dedicated to overall implementation. For the first time in five years, there is a decrease in the share of existing national action plans that include a monitoring framework with indicators, from 86 per cent in 2022 to 81 per cent in 2023. More countries are developing and implementing local action plans, including Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines (namely the regional action plan for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), Somalia and the Sudan. In Uganda, 4 out of 13 districts with local action plans have allocated 1 per cent of their local district budgets to implementing these plans.

88. Most countries and regional organizations with actions plans are part of the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, now comprising 93 Member States and 10 regional organizations. As the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) approaches, Network members have an

<sup>86</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Gender backlash underscores urgency to achieve substantive equality for women and girls: UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls", 28 June 2024.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Breaking down gender biases: shifting social norms towards gender equality", 2023.

<sup>88</sup> See <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/resources/>.

opportunity to be strong advocates and examples for the rest of the world by acting on their own commitments to the agenda.

89. By July 2024, the multi-stakeholder Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action had reached 225 signatories, including 28 Member States and territories. In 2023, signatories spent close to 1 billion dollars, with the highest expenditures on financing commitments, followed by actions to secure women's participation in peace processes. The signatories also intensified their efforts in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Ukraine, and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>89</sup>

90. National human rights institutions and international human rights mechanisms, investigations, processes and treaty bodies play a key role in the women and peace and security agenda. Among 41 conflict-affected countries and territories with data, 25 had national human rights institutions fully or partially compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).<sup>90</sup> In 2023, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women published a draft general recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. The draft includes recommendations on women's participation in peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction efforts, transitional justice, national defence and security, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping. Also in 2023, the Committee issued concluding observations on 25 different countries submitting their periodic reports, and more than two thirds of the concluding observations included recommendations on women and peace and security. Between 2013, when general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations was adopted by the Committee, and 2023, 103 State parties have reported on their implementation of the women and peace and security agenda as part of their official reports to the Committee.

## **B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations**

91. Against the backdrop of the backlash against gender equality and women's human rights, the United Nations will stand firm in its commitment to uphold and advance these rights and to realize gender equality in line with the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General has made this a priority across all new initiatives that were or are being launched, including Our Common Agenda, the New Agenda for Peace, the call to action for human rights and the New Vision for the Rule of Law. The Secretary-General has requested the United Nations system to deliver on its women and peace and security commitments, initially issued in 2019 (S/2019/800) by 2026. In addition, on 8 March 2024, building on previous findings and recommendations, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, which is aimed at strengthening the means of implementation, including through leadership accountability, adequate resourcing, political will and strengthened partnerships.

92. Efforts continued to strengthen data and analysis and their use to better address the complexities of gender inequalities. In crisis contexts where statistical systems and the overall quality of data are often low, or weakened by conflict, it is critical to invest in surveys, stakeholder convenings and other innovative methodologies in order to capture real-time data, including disaggregated by sex and age, and to strengthen situation analysis so as to inform policymaking, planning and programming. In

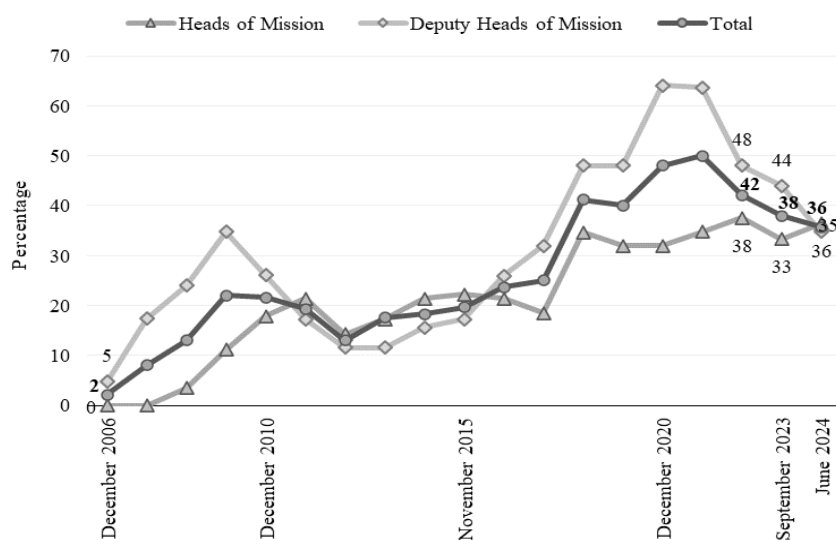
<sup>89</sup> See <https://wpscompact.org/accountability-report-2024/> (forthcoming).

<sup>90</sup> See <https://ganhri.org/paris-principles/>.

settings such as Afghanistan, Haiti, the Sudan and Ukraine, and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, gender alerts, country and community gender profiles, and rapid gender needs assessments have helped to direct attention to key concerns and elevate women's own voices and perspectives. For instance, since 2022, UN-Women, IOM and UNAMA have undertaken quarterly consultations with diverse Afghan women, thereby elevating their concerns and priorities to the international community. In Ukraine, local women's groups were trained to collect demographic data and compile community gender profiles that informed local authorities as to gaps in services and were used as advocacy tools when developing local action plans on women and peace and security. Greater financial support should be given to such activities, which are critical in informing inclusive policymaking, planning and programming efforts.

93. Over time, considerable progress has been made in improving the representation of women in leadership positions across the Organization. In 2021, in accordance with the Secretary-General's pledge, gender parity was reached for the first time among heads and deputy heads of United Nations field missions – a big step forward from 2006, when there was only one woman serving as Deputy Head of Mission. As of June 2024, 36 per cent of such posts were encumbered by women across all missions (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII  
**Representation of women in United Nations mission leadership as a percentage of total posts, December 2006–June 2024**



Source: Leadership Support Section, Department of Peace Operations and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (June 2024).

94. Another area requiring sustained attention is the need to ensure that the United Nations as an organization is equipped with sufficient staff, gender expertise and resources to deliver on gender equality and women and peace and security commitments and mandates. In addition to broader gender expertise, this should include specialized gender expertise, including on data, digitalization and innovation, in line with the United Nations 2.0 initiative.<sup>91</sup> The Department of Peace Operations

<sup>91</sup> See [www.un.org/two-zero/en](http://www.un.org/two-zero/en).

had established a gender architecture composed of gender units<sup>92</sup> and gender focal points at Headquarters and in eight missions as of 2023, supported by a total of 5 senior gender advisers (at the P-5 level), 48 gender affairs officers and/or advisers, 11 police gender advisers and 24 military gender advisers in 2023. The budget allocated for gender units varies from mission to mission, however, and at Headquarters some posts are reliant on extrabudgetary funding, gratis personnel or secondments, while in missions such posts have been mostly abolished owing to funding constraints. In the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 189 staff were engaged in providing gender expertise and support across 21 special political missions, including 36 full-time gender advisers and 139 gender focal points, as well as 14 sectoral gender experts. Five special political missions were staffed with senior gender advisers (P-5). Through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity Project, managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 21 senior gender advisers were deployed to humanitarian settings.

95. In the most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2024/292), the Secretary-General notes that women's protection advisers are deployed in just 8 of the more than 20 settings covered in the report. In 2023, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), women's protection advisers were deployed for the first time to a non-mission setting, specifically to Ukraine, and at the regional level, the first Senior Women's Protection Adviser was deployed to the United Nations Office to the African Union and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

96. UN-Women continued to play a central role in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including by providing secretariat support to all key global coordination mechanisms and dedicated funds, and by providing expertise and technical support to over 90 countries to deliver on women and peace and security commitments across the full agenda.

97. Despite efforts over time to build the United Nations gender equality architecture, the work is significantly underfunded across the entire United Nations system. It is essential that capacity and resources for gender equality and women and peace and security are not lost when United Nations missions downsize or close. In many settings, that support will be needed more than ever.

## V. Work of the Security Council

98. In its resolution 2242 (2015), the Security Council called for an informal expert group on women and peace and security and for women from civil society to be regularly invited to participate in country-specific meetings of the Security Council. That innovation in the working methods had a significant impact on the Council's decisions and deliberations. Between 2015 and 2023, over 65 per cent of the decisions of the Security Council explicitly included gender-related issues, compared with 35 per cent in the previous 15 years. The average has been trending down in the past

<sup>92</sup> In 2023, 8 out of 12 peacekeeping with explicit gender and women, peace and security mandate had a dedicated gender unit (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)).



two years, however, and reached 58 per cent in 2023, the lowest in seven years.<sup>93</sup> The number of women from civil society invited to speak at the Security Council also saw a decline, from 56 in 2022 to 45 in 2023.<sup>94</sup>

99. Nevertheless, there were several examples in which the Security Council continued to reaffirm the women and peace and security norms that have been built over the past 24 years. In 21 different resolutions in 2023, the Security Council called for women's full, equal and meaningful participation, whether in elections, conflict resolution, or all stages of decision-making related to peace and security. In some resolutions, such as on Cyprus, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, the Council encouraged compliance with specific quotas for women. In resolutions on South Sudan and Libya, the Council called upon parties to recognize the need to protect women-led organizations and women peacebuilders from threats and reprisals. One of the resolutions on Afghanistan was focused on women's rights and women's participation, and the Council called upon the Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restrict the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>95</sup> That resolution was co-sponsored by 91 countries, by far the most of any resolutions adopted in 2023, and an unusually high number in any year. The Security Council did not address gender-related considerations in its decisions to terminate the mandates of MINUSMA or UNITAMS, but did request Member States participating in the Multinational Security Support Mission, a non-United Nations mission, in Haiti to include dedicated expertise on women's protection, and further encouraged women's representation at all levels, and included the progressive reduction of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence as a benchmark to consider the strengthening, modification, suspension or lifting of the sanctions measures. In a historic decision on United Nations funding for African Union peace support operations, the Security Council, in its resolution [2719 \(2023\)](#), emphasized the importance of implementing resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, including as appropriate, through the deployment of women as part of African Union-led peace support operations that the Council may authorize to access United Nations assessed contributions. In December 2023, Security Council resolution [2720 \(2023\)](#) on the situation in Gaza referred to women for the first time, after more than 100 resolutions on this file since the establishment of the Security Council.

100. Although several resolutions on sanctions in recent years have not addressed gender-related issues, six individuals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and four individuals from Haiti believed responsible for sexual violence, among other violations, were sanctioned between December 2023 and February 2024. Research by the International Peace Institute found that only 25 individuals and two entities have been sanctioned for sexual violence and other violations, and none exclusively for that reason, out of a total of 676 individuals and 193 entities currently subjected to sanctions.<sup>96</sup> Among the perpetrators listed in the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence for five or more years, 14 perpetrators of sexual violence have never been sanctioned. While sanctions committees held a cumulative 68 meetings in 2023, none of them were dedicated to gender-related issues, and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1988 \(2011\)](#) approved 16 exemptions to the travel ban for sanctioned members of the Taliban. Despite reports of widespread sexual violence and sexual slavery in the Sudan, both recently and in the past, none of the narrative summaries of the individuals and entities listed

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<sup>93</sup> UN-Women analysis (forthcoming).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Resolution [2681 \(2023\)](#).

<sup>96</sup> Jenna Russo and Lauren McGowan, "UN tools for addressing conflict-related sexual violence: an analysis of listings and sanctions processes", International Peace Institute, April 2024.

by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) concerning the Sudan include references to sexual and gender-based violence or violations against women and girls.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

101. The present report placed a special emphasis on financing for the women and peace security agenda, and in particular for women's organizations at the frontlines of conflict and crises. Available data continue to show limited progress, with a constant risk of reversals when countries' priorities shift. In the current global context, it is more important than ever to close the gap between expressed policy priorities and commitments on women and peace and security and the funding required to execute them, especially in national budgets as the most important economic policy document of any government. An intentional approach is needed to meaningfully break ground. For its part, the United Nations will ensure that all entities have plans in place to reach the minimum 15 per cent financial target dedicated for gender equality programming. Moving forward, it will be important for United Nations missions to track and report on the amount of funding that is dedicated to gender-related issues. In line with recommendations of the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality and the United Nations System-Wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, I will request United Nations system entities, as well as all multi-partner trust funds, to improve their targets, tracking and reporting on funding for women's civil society organizations in conflict-affected countries. In the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, I recommend that all new multi-partner trust funds establish a 40 per cent target for gender equality programming and coordination and reiterate the goal of raising \$300 million in new funding for women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings.

102. In addition, Member States are urged to:

(a) Ensure that financing is secured for the implementation of national action plans; regional organizations, countries and territories with dedicated policies and plans should consider including a dedicated funding stream for supporting women's organizations;

(b) Increase the number of financial instruments with clear benchmarks for gender equality and women's organizations, meeting or surpassing the minimum targets of 15 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively;

(c) Make an intentional and focused effort to make more funding accessible for diverse and local women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings, including those working on more sensitive and contested issues, such as sexual and reproductive rights and transformative strategies to combat the dominant discriminatory gender norms and narratives. Making such funding accessible requires paying greater attention to issues such as limiting application and reporting processes, building in flexibility for support, as conditions and security in these settings can rapidly change, reducing administrative and bureaucratic impediments, and increasing access to core and long-term funding;

(d) Significantly scale up support for dedicated funds and funding windows targeted specifically at supporting and reaching women's organizations in conflict and crisis settings, including the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

103. I am deeply concerned by the insufficient progress on the women and peace and security agenda in general, as detailed in the present report. 2025 will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It

will also mark the start of the five years remaining to implement the 2030 Agenda. If past anniversaries of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) serve as a guide, more than 100 countries and regional organizations will renew their commitment to the women and peace, and security agenda and share examples of their recent contributions or plans for the near future. Many of them will take the form of new events, guidance, strategies and action plans, which are welcome. However, a large part of the frustration expressed by women peacebuilders is rooted in the disconnect between the ambitious rhetoric and the modest reach of the proposed interventions. A year in advance of this momentous occasion, all countries and regional organizations should be preparing to expend political capital and financial resources to make a tangible difference to women peacebuilders, women human rights defenders and local women's organizations at the frontlines. Below are some suggestions for pledges at the twenty-fifth anniversary:

(a) Match the United Nations commitment to advocate and support an initial minimum target of one third of participants in mediation and peace processes being women, while aiming for parity, including through the adoption of measures for women's direct participation and inclusion, such as targets and incentives;

(b) Repeal all discriminatory laws and policies that violate the human rights of women and girls or result in any form of gender-based discrimination, including laws and policies that undermine the right of diverse women and girls to participate in all spheres of life or their bodily autonomy;

(c) Adopt new and targeted measures to increase women's full, equal and meaningful participation at the local level, including conflict resolution, humanitarian coordination and decision-making, community security, access to justice, early warning, and climate mitigation and adaptation;

(d) Pursue all avenues for stronger international accountability for gross violations of women's rights. Such an approach may entail efforts to: prosecute gender persecution, prepare cases for the International Court of Justice regarding violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, cooperate with the International Criminal Court on the investigation and prosecution of gender-based crimes, support the use of sanctions against individuals in positions of responsibility for the systematic and widespread violations of women's rights, or use national criminal justice systems to hold accountable those that commit crimes against women in all spheres of life, including conflict-related sexual violence, reproductive violence, or violence against women in political and public life, both online and offline;

(e) Commit to scaling up political and financial support to women and peace and security actors in countries undergoing or having completed a recent departure of a peacekeeping or special political mission, and work with alternative multilateral peacekeeping or peace enforcement forces, such as those led by regional and subregional organizations, to ensure that gender-related issues are taken into consideration in their mandates, preparedness, staffing, budget and reporting;

(f) Adopt and fully implement a zero-tolerance approach to any form of intimidation or reprisal against women for their political participation, human rights and humanitarian work, peacebuilding activities or cooperation with United Nations mechanisms, including the Security Council, while safeguarding their right to participation and the independence of their views. Such an approach could entail, for example, reviewing legislation and policies to provide stronger protection to women human rights defenders at risk, including by protecting their work in the digital space, and taking gender-based persecution into consideration in asylum-granting processes;

(g) Ensure an enabling environment and non-discriminatory access for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence to sexual and reproductive rights and services, including emergency care regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, in view of the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of war;

(h) Ensure the least diversion of human and economic resources to armaments and reduce military spending, and enact measures for human-centred disarmament. Such an approach should include greater transparency in arms transfers and military expenditures, strengthening capacities to fully implement arms embargoes, the adoption of gender-responsive small arms and light weapons-related legislation, and policies that mitigate the risk that transferred weapons and ammunition are used to commit or facilitate gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence.

104. The pledges proposed above are the kinds of commitments and actions that women peacebuilders expect from the international community. Only the strong political will of Governments can make women's full, equal and meaningful participation the norm in peace and security interventions and humanitarian action, provide an answer to the erosion of international law and multilateral cooperation, and halt the current trajectory of ever-increasing conflict and arms proliferation, both of which are taking such a heavy toll on women and girls and the prospects for peace for all people.

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