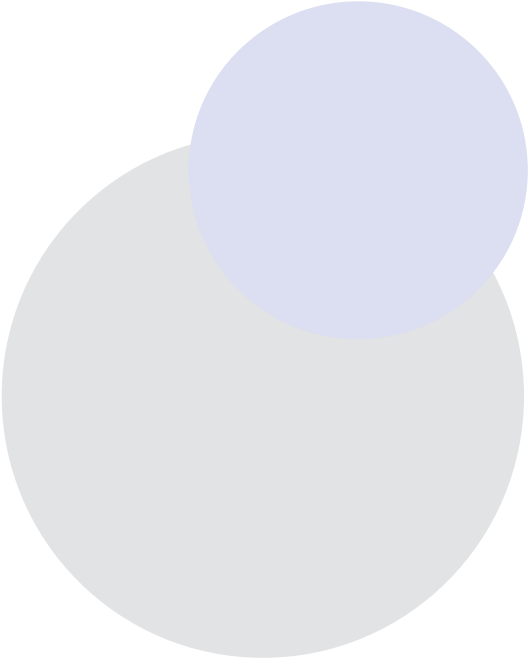


# Peace in Sustainable Development: Aligning the 2030 Agenda with Women, Peace and Security

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## Acknowledgement

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# Peace in Sustainable Development: Aligning the 2030 Agenda with Women, Peace and Security

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, recognizes peace as a precondition for sustainable development. However, the goals and indicators of this agenda fall short in recognizing the intersection of gender and peace. As such, this policy brief examines linkages between Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the 2030 Agenda and provides practical recommendations for their synergistic implementation.

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was introduced on 31 October 2000 with the adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The resolution “reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.”<sup>1</sup> Since its adoption, an additional nine UNSC resolutions, as well as UNSCR 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) have advanced the WPS thematic framework.<sup>2</sup>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted on 25 September 2015 as a “comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets”<sup>3</sup> for sustainable development. The 17 Goals (known as the Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals) and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda serve as the primary framework guiding development initiatives across the globe.

Despite the establishment of the WPS framework, the intersection of gender and peace is not recognized explicitly in Agenda 2030. The key focus of Goal 16 on “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” is the need for peace as a precondition for sustainable development. Its 10 targets cover the reduction of violence and arms proliferation, improvement of transparent and accountable institutions, as well as access to legal identity, justice, information and freedoms for all.<sup>4</sup> Of these targets, none employ gender-sensitive language. Gender is discussed in detail in Goal 5 on “Gender Equality”. However, targets under this goal also largely treat ‘women’ as a monolith and do not recognize the diversity of women and young women’s experiences, particularly in relation to peace, conflict and insecurity.<sup>5</sup> The lack of an explicit recognition of the intersection of gender inequality, peace and insecurity within these goals is a major gap in the 2030 Agenda.

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1 Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. (n.d). Landmark resolution on women, peace and security (security council resolution 1325). Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

2 S/RES/1820, S/RES/1888, S/RES/1889, S/RES/1960, S/RES/2106, S/RES/2122, S/RES/2242, S/RES/2467, S/RES/2493, and S/RES/2535.

3 A/RES/70/1.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

While each agenda holds significant practical and normative power in its respective area of application, the overlap and potential synergies between the two have received little attention, both in theory and practice. In reality, gender equality, peace and security, and sustainable development are inherently linked and mutually reinforcing. Sustainable development is not possible without a basis of sustainable peace, and sustainable peace necessitates the inclusion of women and girls in all dimensions of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. Concurrent and coordinated advancement in all three areas is a precondition for meaningful and continued progress in each.

Given the lack of available resources on this important nexus, this brief contributes the following:

1. Assessment of the 2030 Agenda in the context of conflict-sensitivity and synergies with the WPS framework;
2. Consideration of whether Member States recognize the synergies between WPS and Agenda 2030 in funding commitments and practice; and
3. Presentation of recommendations for heightened alignment and policy coordination in the joint implementation of Agenda 2030 and the WPS framework.

## Is Agenda 2030 conflict-sensitive and aligned with WPS?

In recent years, Agenda 2030 and the WPS agenda have gathered a large array of commitments, policies and programs focused on security, justice and sustainable peace.<sup>6</sup> As each agenda continues to move forward in its respective realm, an understanding of their commonalities and areas of synergy can be a powerful tool for amplifying the implementation of both. To understand the connections between WPS and the 2030 Agenda, it is important to first examine the contributions of WPS to the framing of peace and security prior to, and during, the emergence of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

The Zero Draft of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was released publicly on 4 June 2014.<sup>7</sup> During the Open Working Group (OWG) negotiations on the draft that followed, civil society groups mobilized to provide suggested changes to the text of the Agenda that would better reflect the reality, needs and interests of their respective areas of activity and advocacy.

Ensuring a gender-responsive framing of peace and security in the 2030 Agenda was of particular interest to organizations working within the WPS community. The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), along with other civil society representatives,

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<sup>6</sup> A/73/890-S/2019/448, A/74/976-S/2020/773.

<sup>7</sup> The Zero Draft is currently unavailable on the UN websites. An annotated copy of the Zero Draft can be found here: [https://climatenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/owg12\\_can\\_comments07\\_06\\_2014\\_final.docx](https://climatenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/owg12_can_comments07_06_2014_final.docx)

was an active advocate for the inclusion of gender sensitivity and stronger language on peace, particularly in relation to Goal 16.

In anticipation of the OWG final session in July 2014, GNWP — along with Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women's Refugee Commission, Femmes Africa Solidarité, Center for Women's Global Leadership and Global Justice Center — drafted an open letter to the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, stressing the importance of addressing WPS in the SDGs.<sup>8</sup> Submitted on 18 June 2014, and signed by 112 organizations, the letter offered the following recommendations on Goal 16, based on the four main pillars of WPS:

## 1 Participation

- Target 16.4 – Support and strengthen the target on inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making by adding “meaningful”, “for all”, and “including in **peace processes at all levels and transitional governance arrangements.**”

## 2 Prevention

- Target 16.3 – Support prevention targets on reducing illicit arms trade, add “**reduce excessive military spending**” (to be consistent with Beijing Area E<sup>9</sup> and Agenda 21<sup>10</sup> (22.16.e));
- Target 16.7 – Support building **a culture of non-violence**;
- Target 16.8 – Support strengthening **formal and non-formal dispute resolution mechanisms.**

## 3 Protection

- Target 16.9 – Strengthen targets on **internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees**, support **enhanced gender training for humanitarian and security personnel and relief and recovery services** to uphold human rights, including for women refugees, women human rights defenders and IDPs, call for “support for gender-sensitive durable solutions” for refugees and IDPs;
- Target 16.10 – Implement security sector reform.

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8 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. (2014). Open Letter to the Friends of 1325: Recommendations on the Zero Draft of the Post2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from [https://www.wilpf.org/wilpf\\_statements/no-development-without-gender-equality-and-peace/](https://www.wilpf.org/wilpf_statements/no-development-without-gender-equality-and-peace/)

9 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a framework for gender equality as result of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, which outlines 12 critical areas of concern for the advancement of women's rights in: (A) Poverty; (B) Education and training; (C) Health; (D) Violence against women; (E) Armed Conflict; (F) Economy; (G) Power and decision-making; (H) Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; (I) Human rights; (J) Media; (K) Environment; and (L) the girl child.

10 Agenda 21 is an action plan on sustainable development and precursor to Agenda 2030, which emerged as a result of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. Its provisions are reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda. For more information: <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/agenda21>.

## 4 Relief and Recovery

- Target 16.12 – Support and strengthen the target on equal access to responsive justice systems by addressing **women’s equal access and rights**.

The letter also included recommendations on strengthening Goal 5 by:

- Target 5.7 – Addressing conflict in the context of resources and services by adding “including **multi sectoral services for women and girls in conflict**;”
- Target 5.8 – Addressing conflict in the context of participation by adding “and in **peace and transitional governance processes**,” and
- Target 5.11 – Addressing **conflict in the context of engaging men and boys** by adding “including in conflict settings.”

Despite the mobilization of civil society actors, the majority of the suggestions focused on WPS were not reflected in the final text of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>11</sup> For example:

- Language on peace processes and transitional governance is not reflected in Target 16.4 (now 16.7).
- Reducing excessive military spending is not addressed in Target 16.3 (now 16.4).
- Targets 16.7 and 16.8 on culture of non-violence and dispute resolution mechanisms, and targets 16.9 and 16.10 on IDPs and security forces were removed entirely.
- Target 16.12 on access to justice (now 16.3) includes less specific language and is not gender sensitive.
- Targets 5.7 and 5.8 (now 5.a and 5.5) do not include language recognizing conflict.
- Target 5.11 on men and boys was removed.

As such, the final text of the 2030 Agenda, with the 17 current Goals and Targets, only recognizes the role of peace in sustainable development through Goal 16. However, the targets for this goal, and other goals more broadly, do not address or recognize the impacts of conflict and related violence, internally displaced persons, peace processes and transitional governance processes, and most importantly, the intersections of gender and conflict — key points raised by WPS advocates during the drafting of the 2030 Agenda.

The civil society recommendations on the original draft are valuable for uncovering areas where the framing and language around broader peace and security diverge between the two agendas. These areas present current opportunities for coordinated and collaborative efforts between various actors involved in the implementation of either framework.

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<sup>11</sup> A/RES/70/1.

## Do Member States recognize the role of WPS in sustainable development in practice?

Despite the shallow or absent engagement with WPS in the text of the 2030 Agenda, it is possible for Member States to harness the synergies between these two policy commitments in practice. To assess the extent to which such synergies have been recognized and utilized, this policy brief examines the monitoring and implementation frameworks of each agenda.

The National Action Plans (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, and subsequent resolutions, are national-level strategy documents that “outline objectives and activities that countries take, both on a domestic and international level, to secure the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings; prevent armed conflict and violence, including against women and girls; and ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace and security.”<sup>12</sup> In parallel, Member States create formal or informal national-level sustainable development strategies that outline their specific approach to Agenda 2030.<sup>13</sup> These strategies are reflected in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), multi-stakeholder follow-up and review mechanisms carried out at the country-level in order to “facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”<sup>14</sup>

Among the 277 publicly available VNRs presented from 2016-2022, 64 make some reference to WPS or UNSCR 1325. Within this group, 51 VNRs make explicit reference to States' corresponding WPS NAP, and 4 (Sweden (2017), Iceland (2019), Finland (2020) and Latvia (2022)), mention support or funding for the implementation of WPS and the development of NAPs in other countries. In many cases, WPS and NAPs are mentioned as commitments relevant to Agenda 2030 but not discussed in further depth. The minority of VNRs that more substantively address WPS do so in the context of including women in peace processes, peacebuilding and decision-making; women's contributions to conflict prevention, the inclusion of women and gender mainstreaming in armed and peacekeeping forces; and preventing and addressing gender-based violence. A small number of VNRs also consider WPS in relation to services for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, and women and girls living with disabilities. Only five VNRs (Jordan (2017), DRC (2020), Finland (2020), Solomon Islands (2020) and Sweden (2021)) recognize the Youth, Peace and Security agenda or the role of youth in peacebuilding and peace processes. The VNRs conducted by Canada in 2018,<sup>15</sup> Finland in 2020,<sup>16</sup>

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12 PeaceWomen. (n.d.). National Action Plans. Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org>

13 United Nations. (n.d.). National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS). Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/national-sustainabledevelopmentstrategies>

14 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Reviews. Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

15 Global Affairs Canada. (2018). Canada's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Review. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20312Canada\\_ENGLISH\\_18122\\_Canadas\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_ReviewENv7.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20312Canada_ENGLISH_18122_Canadas_Voluntary_National_ReviewENv7.pdf)

16 Finland Prime Minister's Office. (2020). Voluntary National Review 2020, Finland: Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26261VNR\\_Report\\_Finland\\_2020.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26261VNR_Report_Finland_2020.pdf)



and Germany<sup>17</sup> and Sweden<sup>18</sup> in 2021 offer the most comprehensive recognition of WPS across multiple goals and thematic areas — for example, detailed discussions of priority areas in WPS NAPs; monitoring and evaluation of NAPs; development of a YPS NAP; support for the development of NAPs in other jurisdictions; and, the explicit recognition of WPS in the context of specific goals, and the necessity for their concurrent implementation.

In contrast to the VNRs, over half (57 of 107) of currently available NAPs on WPS recognize the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in some way. While most of these NAPs refer to the 2030 Agenda in passing, a handful recognize gender equality, and the WPS resolution's role in achieving it, as a precondition for sustainable development. Others recognize the interconnected nature of sustainable development and achieving long-lasting peace. Within the NAPs, Agenda 2030, along with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),<sup>19</sup> are often referenced to contextualize WPS within relevant international policy frameworks. Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) are most commonly linked to various components of the NAPs, while Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) are also mentioned.

Ireland's NAP for 2019-2024 offers the most thorough discussion of interlinkages between WPS and each SDG.<sup>20</sup> The Annex of this NAP includes a discussion of the links between each of the 17 SDGs and the WPS agenda/resolutions. The United Kingdom's NAP for 2018-2022 also provides detailed recognition of synergies by aligning NAP indicators evaluation measures with relevant SDG indicators. For example, NAP criteria in the participation pillar are connected to indicators 5.5.1 and 16.7.2 of the 2030 Agenda. This attention to the linkages and relationships between progress indicators<sup>21</sup> is a productive strategy in aligning the practical implementation of SDGs and the WPS resolutions.

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17 German Federal Government. (2021). Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: German Voluntary national Review to the HLPF 2021. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279522021\\_VNR\\_Report\\_Germany.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279522021_VNR_Report_Germany.pdf)

18 Government Office of Sweden (2021). Voluntary National Review 2021, Sweden: Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279582021\\_VNR\\_Report\\_Sweden.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279582021_VNR_Report_Sweden.pdf)

19 CEDAW itself possesses a set of synergies with the WPS agenda. Please see here for a more detailed discussion of these synergies: [https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/PolicyBriefGNWP-2018\\_13Sept\\_2018-1-1.pdf](https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/PolicyBriefGNWP-2018_13Sept_2018-1-1.pdf)

20 Government of Ireland. (2019). Women, Peace and Security: Ireland's Third National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions. Retrieved from <https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/Ireland-NAP-3-2019-2024.pdf>

21 HM Government. (2018). UK National Action Plan on women, Peace and Security 2018-2022. Retrieved from <https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/United-Kingdom-NAP-4-2018-2022.pdf>



## Integrating WPS as a tool for preparing gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive VNRs

The Women, Peace and Security agenda offers a valuable perspective for conducting, analyzing and contextualizing Voluntary National Reviews. In particular, incorporating a WPS framework into the preparation of VNRs supports the development of more inclusive, holistic and actionable outcomes through three key insights: 1) the importance of participatory stakeholder engagement, 2) the impact of intersectional analysis and 3) the role of locally-led gender-sensitive responses to conflict and crises.

In December 2022, the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organized a workshop and virtual knowledge exchange for countries presenting VNRs at the 2023 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). During these sessions, countries discussed challenges and lessons learned from previous VNR processes and identified objectives and areas of improvement for the 2023 reviews. Several participating Member States noted that civil society input can be too broad to be useful for the purposes of the VNR, and that consultations should be organized by SDG.<sup>22</sup> While contextualization of each SDG is critical, the limited inclusion in many VNRs of women's roles implementing the 2030 Agenda outside of SDG 5 on gender equality highlights the risks of failing to adequately consider and substantively engage women as stakeholders across all SDGs.

The WPS agenda identifies women's participation in political, economic, cultural and social life as a requisite for sustainable peace and development and emphasizes the disproportionate impact of conflict and violence on women. It further promotes women's meaningful role as leaders and decision-makers in building and sustaining peace. The effects of development on women are cross-cutting and multiplied. As such, progress toward the full realization of any and each SDG cannot be accurately assessed without a critical understanding of how its implementation has affected women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. Thus, a WPS lens is integral to ensuring VNRs realistically and intersectionally portray national gains and persistent gaps in sustainable development efforts.

Tracking and assessing SDG progress at the national level and adapting implementation strategies also requires an understanding of the impacts of policies on local communities. Civil society's work translating international frameworks, including the WPS agenda, into practical action at the grassroots can provide a blueprint for meaningfully engaging women and other diverse stakeholders in building local ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, NAPs on WPS that effectively integrate synergistic implementation of the SDGs can provide a supportive mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on sustainable development achievements, which can be reflected in VNRs. The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders' flagship Localization of the WPS resolutions strategy<sup>23</sup> offers a prime example of successful outcomes from fostering inclusive, participatory and gender-responsive processes for implementing and contextualizing international policies at the local, national and global levels.

22 United Nations. (2022, December 7). First Workshop for the Voluntary National Reviews to be presented at the 2023 United Nations High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development. Voluntary National Reviews | High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development. <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Summary%20of%20First%20Global%20Workshop%202023%20VNRs.pdf>

23 For more information on the GNWP's Localization of WPS resolutions strategy: <https://gnwp.org/what-we-do/global-policy-local-action/implementation-through-localization/>

## Synergistic funding of WPS

As of 2021, only 36 per cent of WPS NAPs include an implementation budget.<sup>24</sup> A global study of WPS led by UN Women, with significant contributions from GNWP and other women's civil society organizations<sup>25</sup> highlighted a lack of funding as the primary barrier to the implementation of the WPS agenda.<sup>26</sup> Insufficient domestic financing in fragile states and conflict contexts is also identified as a risk to future-oriented sustainable development. These challenges are exacerbated due to external funding for gender equality (e.g., official development assistance) consistently prioritizing sectors such as education and health over peace and security.<sup>27</sup> This trend has continued since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 2020 seeing a more than 30 million dollar decrease from the previous year in bilateral aid to feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries.<sup>28</sup>

The reduction of state military spending is another necessary financial element for the effective implementation of both Agenda 2030 and the WPS agenda. Feminist civil society emphasized the need for this change through its inclusion as a recommendation under the prevention pillar for the Zero Draft of Agenda 2030. Sustainable and inclusive peace necessitates a shift in financing priorities, away from warfare and toward welfare, which begins with changes in current excessive military spending.<sup>29</sup> In fact, reversing the current upward trajectory of global military spending is outlined in the 2020 and 2021 Secretary-General's Report on WPS as a goal for the decade on WPS.<sup>30</sup> Despite the recognized exigency of this shift, in his 2022 report, Secretary-General António Guterres acknowledged the troubling growth of investments in weaponized security over human security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian aid.<sup>31</sup>

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda nevertheless introduces new opportunities for synergistic financing of WPS and the SDGs. Financing of Goals on gender and peace in national-level implementation strategies of the 2030 Agenda can benefit from successful budgeting and financing strategies employed in the realm of WPS. Conversely, NAPs can use links to Goals and Targets from Agenda 2030, and create distinct synergistic activities or programs, to secure specific funding for WPS initiatives. Finally, when State spending is shifted away from the military, more can be invested in the reinforcement of human and social infrastructure that supports sustainable development and sustainable peace.

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24 PeaceWomen. (n.d.). National Action Plans. Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org>

25 Goldberg, D. B. (2016, July 26). CSO survey for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. <https://gnwp.org/cso-survey-for-the-global-study-on-women-peace-and-security/>

26 Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. United Nations. Retrieved from [http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf), p. 372.

27 Ibid, p. 373-374.

28 S/2022/740.

29 Salamat, N. (2020). Investing in Human Security: How Reducing Military Spending Can Ensure Gender-Equal and Safe Communities. Retrieved from <https://gnwp.org/human-security/>

30 S/2021/827, S/2020/946.

31 S/2022/740.

## How can Member States better align Agenda 2030 with the WPS agenda?

As evidenced above, the current body of NAPs and VNRs does not offer sufficiently thorough or in-depth discussions of the WPS or 2030 Agenda agendas. However, recognition and understanding of the mutually reinforcing nature of the agendas is a positive and necessary step toward better practical alignment of the two in practice. Thus, the below recommendations outline specific measures toward better concurrent implementation of the WPS resolutions and Agenda 2030.

Member States committed to comprehensive realization of the WPS agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should:

- 1. Recognize the current gaps of Agenda 2030 in addressing the intersections of gender and conflict, particularly in relation to the role of women and youth in peace processes and peacebuilding.** Acknowledge the unique barriers faced by women in areas experiencing conflict or insecurity in relation to all SDGs, including full and effective participation in political economic and public life (Goal 5.5), equal rights to economic and natural resources (Goal 5.7) and access to justice (Goal 16.3).
- 2. Harmonize and align the implementation of the WPS agenda and Agenda 2030, and ensure coherence in domestic and foreign policy developed based on each agenda.** Meaningfully and intentionally incorporate gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive considerations in all policies and programming under Agenda 2030.
- 3. Proactively consider WPS in the monitoring and evaluation of their national SDG implementation strategies.** This can be achieved by engaging with civil society organizations, particularly grassroots and local organizations, working on WPS implementation and contextualization when designing the review process for the VNR.
- 4. Integrate objectives of NAPs on WPS with broader international policy frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda.** Strengthen commitments made under Agenda 2030 by connecting NAP indicators with SDG indicators.
- 5. Allocate specific funding toward synergistic efforts and programs at the intersection of Agenda 2030 and WPS within NAPs.** Leverage links between Agenda 2030 and the WPS resolutions to ensure that all NAPs have a dedicated and realistic budget.