

Box 3.8.1 The Security Council: Women, Peace, and Security

During September 2009, the UN Secretary-General submitted his first report on the implementation of landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, concerning women, peace, and security. The resolution, adopted in 2000, called upon member states, the United Nations system, parties to conflict, and all other relevant actors to adopt a gender perspective that prioritizes the protection needs of female populations during and after conflict. In his 2009 report, the Secretary-General observed that while much had been done to protect women in conflict settings during the nine years since adoption of Resolution 1325, overall implementation has been uneven and conflict continues to have devastating and disproportionate impact on women and girls in conflict areas.

In response to the Secretary-General's report and in recognizing the continued use of sexual violence as a conflict tool, on 30 September 2009 the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1888, identifying sexual violence as a continued scourge of conflict and outlining decisive action that the UN and its member states can take to prevent sexual violence in conflict settings. Resolution 1888 represents the most extensive evolution of gender issues in peace operations contexts and builds on the similarly focused Resolution 1820 (2008), which urged increased inclusion of female perspectives into all peace and security activities. Taking

into account several recommendations from the Secretary-General's report, Resolution 1888 codifies the incorporation of protection of women and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence against women as integral to peace operations, and exhibits a stronger commitment from the Security Council than ever before.

Among the most significant aspects of Resolution 1888 is the appointment of several posts dedicated specifically to ensure a more comprehensive approach to supporting the role of women in areas of conflict. The resolution calls for the creation of a Special Representative post to provide leadership for and strengthening of the existing UN coordination mechanisms as well as advocacy for ending sexual violence against women from all relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the resolution calls for the creation of a team of experts that can be rapidly deployed to contexts where the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict is of concern. The team is to comprise specialists in rule of law, civilian and military judicial systems, mediation, criminal investigation, security sector reform, witness protection, fair trial standards, and public outreach, and will support national efforts to enhance rule of law. Resolution 1888 also calls for the appointment of women's protection advisers to be included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations where appropriate.

As cited in the Secretary-General's report, the lack of information and reporting on sexual violence remains a key issue. In this vein, Resolution 1888 calls for a systematic reporting system on gender-based violence to be implemented, and for data to be shared regularly with the Security Council. Furthermore, the resolution requests that an annual report on the progress of Resolution 1820 be submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General.

For the first time, sanctions now contain language regarding women and security. The Council has agreed that when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict, it should consider special criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence. The possibility of sanctions sends a strong message to countries facing violent upheaval by both governments and rebels at the expense of the safety of women.

The Secretary-General stressed that in order for Resolution 1888 to be a positive force in the protection of female populations, it must be implemented in the global frameworks provided by its predecessor resolutions. In addition, on 5 October 2009, Resolution 1889 was adopted, calling for both a review of Resolution 1325 and the inclusion of gender issues as the Peacebuilding Commission reviews the UN's postconflict efforts.