

**African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC)
Open Session on Women Peace and Security
Thursday 5 November 2015**

Intervention: Australian Ambassador, HE Mark Sawers

Thank you Mr Chair.

Australia is pleased to participate in today's open session on the implementation of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1325. Australia has been a strong and consistent advocate for women, peace and security. This agenda was a priority for Australia during our term on the UN Security Council and remains a focus for us today.

We congratulate the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) on its decision to institutionalize an annual open session on this important issue.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to global peace and security. The sustainable resolutions to conflicts should be built on the involvement of women in decision-making, the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, and peace processes that take into account the needs and experiences of both men and women and the different impacts that conflict has on them.

Mr Chair, key advances have been made, including this year, globally and in Africa, to accelerate the implementation of the agenda

- Australia welcomes the United Nation's Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security
- We were proud to co-sponsor last month's unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2242
- And we were pleased to participate in the launch of the groundbreaking Global Study
- Fifty-two countries have so far developed National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security, including Australia and 16 AU Member States
 - o today's session provides a welcome opportunity to examine AU member states' experiences and challenges in implementing their national action plans
- The African Union has also appointed a Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security in 2014
 - o and we congratulate Madame Diop on the leadership role she is playing to galvanise action on this agenda across the continent
- We are pleased that the number of women in AU field offices is increasing and welcome the adoption of a AUC gender, peace and security programme which is supporting the implementation of Resolution 1325 and other related resolutions.

But there are also areas where the international community is still failing.

As the African Union's recently released Commission of Inquiry report on South Sudan has only served to underline, women and children continue to suffer disproportionately in conflict and post-conflict countries – rates of violence, including sexual violence, against women are escalating.

Australia is pleased to be able to make a number of contributions to help address this dire situation.

Firstly, we have committed an additional 4 million Australian dollars over three years to the Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action bringing our total contribution to AUD5.5 million. This contribution recognises that more is needed to support the critical role of women's organisations in preventing and resolving conflict, building peace and ensuring relief and recovery.

Second, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda must be implemented across the military. Accordingly, the Australian Defence Force is deploying more women and increasing their number in senior decision-making roles; has introduced recruitment targets for women in non-traditional roles; and is developing a gender adviser and female engagement team capability. The Australian Defence Force will also provide a Technical Expert for Women, Peace and Security to UN Women for five years from 2016.

Our third pledge recognizes that women, girls and women's organisations are vital to promoting gender equality in countering terrorism and violent extremism. We will support new research in Melbourne on "Preventing Conflict and Countering Fundamentalism through Women's Empowerment and Civil Society Mobilization".

Australia will also support women's organisations to participate in the network of civil society groups being established as an outcome of the June 2015 Regional Summit to Counter Violent Extremism held in Sydney.

Fourth, Australia understands that humanitarian efforts need to do more to prevent and support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. This is why Australia has dedicated specific funding to address sexual and gender-based violence in response to the Syria crisis – AUD7 million as part of our overall commitment of AUD59 million in the last 12 months.

Finally, Australia is reviewing our National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security and we will use the Global Study to inform future actions.

Mr Chair, we call on the UN system as a whole – including its 54 African Member States – to respond to the Global Study's recommendations. Women,

peace and security must be considered and implemented as part of the Secretary General's Review of Peace Operations and the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, as well as through this High Level Review.

Global Leaders have now agreed to the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognised the links between development, human rights, and peace and security, and placed gender equality at the heart of these efforts.

We must, as a global community, do more to deliver on these promises for women around the world.