

**Consultation on  
“Strengthening UN peace operations support  
to gender-responsive  
disarmament, demobilization and reintegration  
and security sector reform:  
Leveraging opportunities and lessons learnt”**

October 2019

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## Executive Summary

From 30 to 31 July 2019 in Entebbe, Uganda, the United Nations Department of Peace Operations convened a consultation with women leaders and ex-combatants from Mali, the Central African Republic and Colombia, as well as representatives from United Nations peace missions in these three countries. The consultation aimed at compiling best practices and lessons learnt in the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) processes.

The consultation resulted in eight key recommendations that are tailored to give strategic direction to strengthening women's meaningful participation in DDR and SSR processes, and thereby deepen the Department of Peace Operations' peacekeeping effectiveness – a priority in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. These recommendations are also used to inform the Department of Peace Operations' advocacy messages and engagement with Member States in the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), including the recently concluded high-level event on "Women Lead Political Solutions to Sustain" Peace held on 26 September 2019, during the week of the United Nations General Assembly.

### Actions to be taken by the United Nations Peacekeeping

1. United Nations leadership to strengthen their good offices and advocacy with Member States on the importance of promoting women's political agency and leadership in DDR and SSR processes.
2. Strengthen accountability towards the implementation of United Nations policies on gender-responsive DDR and SSR, including by developing clear benchmarks to monitor and report progress and challenges.
3. Ensure that United Nations support to peace processes and political solutions is consistently informed by analysis and assessments of political and social barriers to women's meaningful participation in DDR and SSR processes.
4. Enhance coordination within peace operations and across United Nations entities to enable effective and coherent delivery of assistance to gender-responsive DDR and SSR outcomes.
5. Invest in strategic partnerships with women networks and women leaders, including women ex-combatants and women in the security and defence sector to achieve inclusive political solutions that are anchored in gender-responsive DDR and SSR processes.

### Actions to be taken by the United Nations Member States

6. Ensure that women benefit from equal opportunities of professional advancement in the security forces, including by addressing systemic discrimination and barriers to their full and effective representation in leadership positions.
7. Member States and regional intergovernmental organizations consistently take measures to empower women's organizations and women leaders, including through engaging with women ex-combatants and women in security forces, to ensure they fully participate and influence the political negotiations of DDR and SSR elements of peace agreements.

## Actions to be taken by the United Nations Security Council

8. The United Nations Security Council mandates should continue to explicitly recognize women's contribution to the peace and political processes, and more clearly call upon peace operations to support women's meaningful participation and leadership in all stages of DDR and SSR processes.

## Part 1: Introduction

The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This is the critical moment for the Department of Peace Operations to document achievements, good practices and lessons learnt in implementing its commitments to the WPS agenda, in line with the Secretary-General's report on WPS (S/2018/900), the strategic frameworks with regional partners, and the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. Towards this vision, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations requested at the WPS Task Force meeting on 29 April 2019 that the Gender Unit coordinates across Headquarters and peacekeeping missions an initiative to review, document and propose recommendations to strengthen Department of Peace Operations efforts in promoting gender-responsive DDR and SSR.

In this context, the Department of Peace Operations' Gender Unit, in close collaboration with the DDR Section and the SSR Unit of the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, organized a consultation on *"Strengthening UN peace operations support to gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform: Leveraging opportunities and lessons learnt"* in Entebbe, Uganda from 30 to 31 July 2019. The consultation brought together nearly 20 participants, including women leaders and ex-combatants from Mali, the Central African Republic and Colombia. Among them were also technical specialists from United Nations headquarters, United Nations peace operations in these three countries, and civil society.

This outcome document summarizes key issues discussed over the two-day consultation and provides strategic and operational recommendations for the Department of Peace Operations to accelerate the implementation of the WPS agenda throughout SSR and DDR processes. These findings will also inform Department of Peace Operations' advocacy messages and engagement with Member States in the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 in October 2020.

## Part 2: Main Discussions

### 2.1. Mission mandates and policy framework on gender-responsive DDR and SSR in peacekeeping

Since the development of the WPS agenda in 2000<sup>1</sup>, the Department of Peace Operations has increased its efforts in realizing its commitments through adopting policy and accountability frameworks. These examples include the [2018 Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Operations Policy](#) as well as a range of gender-specific guidance on DDR and SSR.

In the field of DDR, the 2006 [Integrated DDR Standards](#) (IDDRS) provided a dedicated module on [gender](#), which is currently being updated to take into account the developments in the WPS agenda in the past decade. In 2012, the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR released the [Guide to Gender-responsive DDR Standards](#).

In SSR, the [Inter-Agency SSR Task Force](#)<sup>2</sup>, co-chaired by Department of Peace Operations and the United Nations Development Programme, developed in 2012 a [Integrated Technical Guidance Note on Gender Responsive SSR](#). In 2014, the United Nations approach to SSR was harmonised with [Security Council resolution 2151](#), which includes a commitment to gender inclusion consistent with the WPS agenda.

These collective efforts have provided timely support to peacekeeping missions as the United Nations Security Council has increasingly highlighted women's participation in decision-making as a key element for promoting peace and security. This is evident in the prioritisation of WPS, DDR and SSR in the mandates of peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. For example, in the Central African Republic, the 2019 Khartoum Peace Agreement commits the Government to the establishment of the Mixed Special Security Units and the integration of former members of armed groups into the security services as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. In Mali, the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation provided for the development of a National SSR Strategy, a National DDR Strategy, which provides a road map for the reconstitution of the Defence and Security Forces, the accelerated DDR-Integration of the "Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination", and the broader cantonment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of signatory armed groups, including the implementation of a Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme.

The Department of Peace Operations currently operates in an increasingly complex environment marked by limited resources, donor fatigue, stalled peace processes, as well as new types of armed groups and politicized security forces. This poses a number of challenges to the effective implementation of the WPS agenda, mission mandates and gender-responsive guidances on DDR and SSR processes. In some contexts, the reach and control of democratic security forces appear to be contracting rather than expanding its authority, enabling non-State actors to occupy the void. In other contexts, elected officials instrumentalise security institutions to consolidate their power, which in return undermines the national consensus and social contract which are fundamental to their legitimacy and democratic governance.

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<sup>1</sup> Since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) [Women, Peace and Security](#) the normative framework expanded with eight subsequent resolutions. 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); and 2467 (2019)

<sup>2</sup> IASSRTF continues to coordinate guidance development, including by supporting UN Women, the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to review the forthcoming 2019 Gender and Security Toolkit for security sector practitioners.

In light of these challenges, participants discussed the promising practices and lessons learnt that could accelerate and enhance the implementation of the WPS agenda in the DDR and SSR processes.

## 2.2. Promising practices and lessons learnt in implementing the WPS agenda within DDR and SSR processes

### a) Gender-responsive DDR processes

In recent decades the practice of DDR has undergone seismic shifts and moved away from being understood as a stand-alone programme to manage male combatants out of armed groups, to a process involving male and female combatants, children in fighting forces, supporters and dependants along with communities affected by armed conflict and receiving combatants back into civilian life. The concept of 'one man, one gun' has been scrutinised and become less prominent as defining entry criteria into a DDR process. There has been concomitant perception change about female combatants fostering a broader awareness of the diverse roles fulfilled by women's and girls associated with fighting forces. As noted, since 2006, a more nuanced understanding of gender in DDR processes has been progressed with the release of the gender module in the [2006 Integrated DDR Standards](#). The reality of women and girls' diverse roles associated with armed actors was clarified across three categories: combatants, supporters and dependants.

There has been increased understanding of the diversity of women's roles in preventing and resolving violent conflict, and their direct involvement in non-State armed groups as fighters, supporters and dependants. This also entails shifting from the perception of women as solely victims of armed conflict, to recognising them as peacemakers, protagonists, advocates, analysts, and spoilers.

#### **Project "From Victims to Actors" in Mali (2016-2018)**

The project aimed to transform the sole narrative of women as victims in armed conflict into a better understanding of women's multiple identities, contributions and political agency. With support from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Nations Population Fund and UN Women, the integrated response services were strengthened to reduce prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence against women's participation in public life. A 'one stop' centre was established in Mopti enabling women to receive timely and consolidated services on health care, legal advice and referral support. Furthermore, women's organizations had better access to transitional justice processes and enhanced their intermediary roles between displaced people, returnees and service providers (the State and civil society).

Capitalizing on these successes, MINUSMA has supported civil society organizations in setting up an independent Women's Observatory to monitor women's meaningful participation in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, including in SSR and DDR commissions. The Mission has also conducted a study on women's meaningful participation in the peace process which further illustrates the diversity of women's contributions and capabilities. This study seeks to elucidate women's roles to prevent and resolve violent conflict in Mali and the subregion of West Africa, as well as their status as supporters of violence and combatants. It will inform better targeting of the upcoming DDR process to ensure women are fully and meaningfully included.



A notable development includes the consolidation of Community Violence Reduction (CVR) initiatives in support of or as a complement to DDR programmes. This proves to be a critical economic and social opportunity for women and girls associated with fighting forces but not holding weapons and, therefore, technically ineligible for disarmament and demobilization, access to livelihood, education and psychosocial support initiatives. By promoting alternative livelihoods combined with vocational and skills training to ex-combatants and youth-at-risk, Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects contribute to preventing violence in conflict-affected settings. The roles and influence of women in Community Violence Reduction (CVR) is also noteworthy as they can be a driving force for reconciliation, conflict resolution and violence reduction in their communities. In the Central African Republic, women in local committees participating in the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme act as mediators in the resolution of community conflicts. They play a vital role in the sensitization activities undertaken at the community level to promote peace, reconciliation and social cohesion; women encourage men and boys to renounce violence and to lay down weapons. The credibility and contribution of women in encouraging the handing-in of weapons has been crucial to mitigating armed conflict.

The practice of DDR has evolved to have a stronger focus on the 'reintegration',

#### **Female ex-combatants lead reintegration strategy in Colombia**

Following the peace agreement, former female combatants of "*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*" (FARC) developed their own reintegration strategy to guide the Government, donors and United Nations agencies on their interests and needs for the reintegration process. This was then negotiated along with the Government's own strategy and resulted in specific gender actions in the national reintegration policy. The process of articulating their needs and negotiating them was central to the establishment of their political identities in the post-conflict period. A gender technical working group has been created under the National Reintegration Council which has members of Government and FARC, to articulate and follow up on its implementation.

While this provides an excellent opportunity, its current implementation requires greater resources to advance the gender actions of the reintegration policy.

concentrating on engaging communities as a means of successfully reintegrating combatants into civilian life. This has been spurred by multifaceted recognition of the psychological aspects of transitioning to civilian life and the need to better address social and cultural dimensions of this transition. A participant reflected that DDR is often viewed as a highly technical exercise, but it is in fact highly psychological as fighters relinquish long-standing identities, forms of power and status and group solidarity. Women in their multiple roles have been at the forefront of advancing more inclusive and integrated approaches to reintegration as they are often expected to provide care not only for their families, but also for other ex-combatants, including mental health and social support.

Despite the existing guidance, critical challenges remain. Firstly, in addition to obstacles to women's participation in peace efforts, the political reintegration of former combatants remains limited. Colombia constitutes a key example of good practice, illustrated by the establishment of gender quotas to ensure female former combatants could access opportunities to be elected to the national parliament, responding to the existing national law of a gender quota of 30 percent which benefitted women former combatants, given the transition of the armed group into a political party. Secondly, although Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects serve to complement and support DDR programmes, to-date eligibility criteria across peace processes are still based on male-oriented premises (e.g. role as active combatant, possession of weapon), thus ignoring the wide range of functions carried out by women in support of war efforts. Thirdly, the lack of adequate funding certainly undermines gender-responsive measures. Concurrently this issue is aggravated by insufficient coordination and joint planning. Fourthly, in order to design and implement gender-specific interventions, women must be regularly consulted, allowing the identification and systematic integration of their needs and options to address them. This requires engaging them as ex-combatants and community members, investing in targeted awareness, skill building and access to funding, and ensuring their meaningful participation throughout the implementation process.



## b) Gender-responsive SSR processes

The United Nations support to national SSR processes has evolved considerably over the past 20 years. It has transitioned from a predominant focus on 'equip and train' to a nationally led process of assessment, review and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation to enhance the security sector's ability to provide effective, accountable and inclusive services.

A central tenet of recent efforts on gender-responsive SSR was described by one

participant: *'nothing for us, without us.'* Security services can only be credible and effective if the whole population – women and men, young people, security actors and civilians – meaningfully and visibly participate in the design and delivery of services.

While some gains have been made in United Nations support to national processes in improving the number of women entering militaries, police services, customs, intelligence and other security services, there remains significant male dominance of these professions. The under-representation of women in security services also has consequences for the number of women in United Nations peacekeeping missions as troops and police. The roles of women in security services, in particular in decision-making positions, remain unequal to men in most countries. Women are typically constrained to non-combat 'feminised' functions (administration, logistics). They are also subjected to male-centered policies for human resources, unfriendly policies for maternity leave and childcare, facilities, uniforms and equipment.

The consultation in Entebbe built on the previous high-level discussions<sup>3</sup> on the enduring challenges inhibiting women from reaching equal participation in security. More specifically, participants also noted that female ex-combatants were often not fully appraised of opportunities to enter security services due to lack of visibility, political will and stigma attached to women ex-combatants in post-conflict contexts. Retention and promotion of women to senior positions were also referred to as a stubborn challenge. As one participant noted, 'acts of valor' and active combat experience are central to promotion in many militaries. Yet frontline roles are held back formally and informally from women, further impacting their ability to rise in rank. It was also noted that many of these barriers are amenable to practical solutions (e.g, building bathrooms for women where only male bathrooms exist), but most of the barriers require transforming gender bias, patriarchal norms and logic, deeply embedded structural sexism and cultures of harassment and discrimination of women. Consistent and genuine leadership and behavioural change are paramount for transcending such inequalities.

While there are strategies in place to accelerate women's representation in these

#### **Liberian Gender and Security Sector National Task Force (2017)**

With support from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Liberian Gender and Security Sector National Task Force was established in March 2017 and has proved an effective way to foster collaboration and coherence among gender units of national security institutions.

The Task Force is chaired by the Ministers of Justice, Defense and Gender and its membership comprises representatives from the Liberia Immigration Service, Liberia National Police, Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Liberian National Fire Service (LFS), Liberia Commission of Small Arms (LIS), Liberia Armed Forces (AFL) and Executive Protection Services. National civil society partners, United Nations agencies and donors also take part in the bi-monthly task force meetings.

Concrete successes have been the establishment of a gender office within the AFL and LFS, and reinforcement of the LIS, DEA and BCR gender offices through the development of Terms of Reference for their operationalization. Other key activities of the Task Force have been the development of an outreach programme to encourage women to join security institutions and support for development and alignment of institutional gender policies and workplans.

<sup>3</sup> The roundtable on gender parity and SSR in March 2019 convened by the United Nations Groups of Friends of SSR, co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa, and on Gender Parity, co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar.

traditionally male dominated sectors, effective results on women's participation and influence will require 'enabling measures' that can politically transform long held stereotypes about women and security – both in terms of representation and participation in decision-making of security priorities. Strategic partnerships of United Nations operations with women's networks/coalitions – at national and regional levels – can serve as a crucial catalyst to achieving these results.

In this regard, participants emphasised the need for the Department of Peace Operations to prioritize support to an initiative aiming to transform gender bias, patriarchal norms and the male dominant culture in the security sector, including by: increasing the proportion of women at all levels of the security sector institutions, in particular in decision-making positions; promoting the empowerment of women and their networks to inspire change in the security sector; preventing and addressing sexual harassment and pervasive sexism and other forms of discrimination

undermining women's ability to be safe and respected in the security sector workplace; as well as engaging in advocacy, education and awareness-raising programmes on the equal role of women in the security sector.



### c) Enhanced analysis, advocacy and coordination

In the past 20 years, there has been considerable growth in understanding and evidence of the diversity of women's roles in non-State armed groups as fighters, supporters and dependants, as well as in the State armed forces as security personnel. This has been informed by dedicated research and analysis which perceived women not solely as victims of armed conflict, but also as peacemakers, combatants, civic mobilisers, and potential spoilers. The change in the way women are portrayed from a passive to an active role in peace and security is also observable particularly over the course of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on WPS.

Central to this shift in the way

#### Gender-responsive conflict analysis

The Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs and UN Women are working to ensure that mission drawdowns and transitions are informed by gender-responsive conflict analysis. Between 2018 and 2019, this joint initiative has placed women priorities at the center of the United Nations transition planning for the peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Liberia and Darfur.

An example of the positive impact of the early application of gender-sensitive analysis into SSR processes is drawn from Burkina Faso, Liberia and The Gambia, where United Nations SSR advisers between 2017 and 2019 supported national authorities to undertake gender-sensitive assessments of the security sector. These assessments identified the low representation of women in the security services as a key challenge for the building of more legitimate security forces and informed the development of national security policies and strategies that are responsive to the needs of women, men, girls and boys.

women are portrayed has been the rise of gender-responsive political analysis. Participants emphasised such analysis as a fundamental starting point for effective gender mainstreaming in DDR and SSR processes but recalled that the United Nations “... capacity for gender-responsive conflict analysis has been inconsistent and weak”, as recognized by the Secretary-General’s Report on WPS (OP. 19). The DDR and SSR teams in Headquarters and missions have limited capacities and resources to consistently undertake in-depth gender analysis and collect data to track progress towards the WPS Agenda. This contributes to the developments of policies and programmes that, while based on consultations with multiple stakeholders, are not fully grounded in an in-depth understanding of gender social dynamics and their influence over DDR and SSR processes.

#### d) Strengthened gender capacity to support SSR and DDR processes

There was also considerable reference to the importance of training for the implementation of the WPS agenda in SSR and DDR processes, particularly trainings that result in lasting skill and knowledge uptake and behaviour change. Participants noted that behaviour change among ex-combatant groups and national security institutions is difficult to achieve with ad hoc short bursts of training of the kind typically offered by peacekeeping missions. In many contexts, capacity-building assistance has also been misdirected at women who are consistently framed as ‘lacking capacity’ whereas men’s skills and expertise are rarely questioned even when they falter or fail in the leadership of national DDR and SSR processes.

Women leaders from conflict affected countries reflected on the parlous quality of gender-responsive DDR and SSR-related advice offered to them by the United Nations peacekeeping missions during the peace negotiations and subsequent implementation phases. Former combatants noted that, in their experience, information on gender-inclusive DDR was often unclear. There was insufficient technical advice or training tools available to them, thus indicating that existing guidance on gender-responsive DDR requires greater dissemination and availability in more languages.

#### **Innovative approaches to developing gender capacities**

In Liberia, with support from UNMIL SSR, more than 70 gender focal points from security sector institutions, ministries and civil society organizations participated in a three-month transformative learning experience and capacitation process. The course included four-hour classes once a week divided into two hours of readings materials provided on gender equality, patriarchal norms and feminism, and followed by class discussion with leading experts and practitioners. Participants were also required to undertake a capstone and research project, which reflects on the status of women and gender inequalities within their various sectors and institutions using the concepts, theories and frameworks learned in the course.

In Colombia, with support from the United Nations Mission in Colombia and the FARC Gender Committee, the National Protection Unit adopted a gender module in training curricula for former combatants entering the national bodyguard scheme for ex-combatants and new FARC political party. The training also included a session for FARC women only which provided the space to reinforce messaging about the value of their role, clarified concerns and created a safe space for them to raise questions.

Anchored in practice experience across missions, discussions highlighted that the effectiveness of the United Nations support to the implementation of the WPS mandates within SSR and

DDR processes lies on the collective commitment of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and the head of DDR and SSR components to ensure that high-quality gender expertise (typically in the form of gender advisers and dedicated focal points within their SSR and DDR teams) and financial resources are available for timely integration WPS priorities in all dimensions of peace operations. This also demands more tailored and regular guidance by the United Nations Headquarters on priorities areas for the implementation of the DDR and SSR elements of the WPS agenda including by regular communication with gender focal points and code cables with strategic directions. It was emphasised that the primary responsibility to mainstream the WPS agenda in the United Nations support to national DDR and SSR processes lies with United Nations decision-makers and senior leaders; therefore, strengthened accountability frameworks of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and DDR and SSR head of field components is of high importance.

## Part 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

The consultation in Entebbe has demonstrated that the Department of Peace Operations has made substantive progress in providing guidance on supporting gender-responsive national DDR and SSR processes. However, challenges remain on the implementation of the WPS agenda throughout the United Nations assistance to national DDR and SSR processes. Considering the commitments under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and in the lead-up to the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in October 2020, it is important that the Department of Peace Operations continue its concerted efforts to accelerate progress on delivering its WPS and identifying strategic and operational areas for strengthening, for which the following mutually-reinforcing recommendations are proposed.

### Actions to be taken by United Nations Peacekeeping

1. **United Nations leadership to strengthen their good offices and advocacy with Member States on the importance of promoting women's political agency and leadership in DDR and SSR processes.** The Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the peacekeeping missions should strengthen their advocacy and good offices with host States on the importance of women's meaningful participation in all stages of national DDR and SSR processes. The effective inclusion of women in these political processes requires strong national leadership and political will. The United Nations leadership should encourage national partners through targeted messages to be prepared by DDR, SSR and Gender Unit teams, as well as outreach materials on women's roles in political processes, including as trusted brokers and intermediaries within communities, armed groups and security institutions.
2. **Strengthen accountability towards the implementation of United Nations policies on gender-responsive DDR and SSR, including by developing clear benchmarks to monitor and report progress and challenges.** The United Nations leadership should invest in improved monitoring frameworks to advance the implementation of United Nations policies on gender-responsive DDR and SSR. Participants recommended the development of accountability frameworks for United Nations DDR and SSR leadership in the field and Headquarters levels, including workplans with baselines and indicators on the WPS agenda to best monitor, report and measure progress of the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Guidance Note on Gender Responsive SSR and recommendation of the [Integrated DDR Standards](#). The Gender Unit, DDR Section and SSR Unit in Headquarters should strengthen their guidance and targeted trainings on the operationalization of these frameworks by peacekeeping operations, including by convening regular video and teleconference meetings as well as deploying field missions, when and if needed.
3. **Ensure that United Nations support to peace processes and political solutions is consistently informed by analysis and assessments of political and social barriers to women's meaningful participation in DDR and SSR processes.** The United Nations offices on gender, DDR and SSR in peacekeeping operations should ensure that systematic gender analysis informs all forms of support to national DDR and SSR processes. While data collection has become more available over the past 20 years, there is a need for adopting gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data into United Nations support to DDR and SSR. Gender, DDR and SSR field teams are encouraged to jointly undertake in-depth assessments to identify and collect data on the political and social

barriers to women's meaningful participation in their areas of work. These analyses will ensure that United Nations engagement is guided by a strong understanding of country-specific realities. Participants also advised against stand-alone activities which are not informed by pre-assessments and may have limited results.

4. **Enhance coordination within peace operations and across United Nations entities to enable effective and coherent delivery of assistance to gender-responsive DDR and SSR outcomes.** The leadership of the United Nations peacekeeping operations working on gender, DDR, and SSR should enhance coordination with the United Nations entities on the implementation of relevant DDR and SSR elements of the WPS resolutions. At the field level, mission gender task forces comprised of SSR and DDR staff are all vital vehicles in this regard. DDR and SSR field teams are requested to nominate gender focal points with expertise to implement WPS resolutions in coordination with Gender Units. At the Headquarters level, the Department of Peace Operations WPS Task Force, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General, along with the Inter-Agency SSR Taskforce and the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on DDR should continue to facilitate information-sharing and joint engagement on gender-responsive SSR and DDR.
5. **Invest in strategic partnerships with women networks and women leaders, including women ex-combatants and women in security and defence sectors to achieve inclusive political solutions that are anchored in gender-responsive DDR and SSR processes.** The leadership of the United Nations offices on Gender, DDR and SSR should strengthen their collaboration with women's organizations/networks as critical actors of political process. Facilitating the representation of senior women leaders, including female ex-combatants, security officers and their organizations in national and United Nations decision-making bodies, and ensuring that their roles and contributions are fully integrated in peace agreements and policies contributes to wider ownership, transparency and inclusivity in the DDR and SSR processes.

#### Actions to be taken by the United Nations Member States

6. **Ensure that women benefit from equal opportunities of professional advancement in the security forces, including by addressing systemic discrimination and barriers to their full and effective representation in leadership positions.** Gender quota has been proven to be a successful vehicle for increasing women's representation in the SSR process. Participants however highlighted the importance of addressing other dimensions of women's participation, including by undertaking barrier assessments to identify institutional factors inhibiting women from joining, staying with, or being promoted within security sector institutions as well as by developing human resource policies to remedy recruitment, retention and prevention of bias; public campaigns addressing long-held stereotypes about women serving in security services; coaching, mentoring and training programmes for women to bridge education gaps to meet selection criteria and learning opportunities to finesse leadership and management; caucuses to share experiences and support other women; and advocacy plans for the appointment of women to decision-making positions in the security sector including by identifying relevant candidates and experts.
7. **Member States and regional intergovernmental organizations consistently take measures to empower women's organizations and women leaders, including through engaging with women ex-combatants and women in security forces, to ensure they fully participate and influence the political negotiations of DDR and SSR elements**

**of peace agreements.** Women are experts on a number of pertinent DDR and SSR matters ranging from weapons management, to policymaking and intelligence etc. Further investments in advanced education opportunities for women to lead DDR and SSR processes would elevate their capacities to navigate and address barriers in male-dominant professions. Facilitating consistent consultations and networking among women leaders and women's organizations, as well as elevating the levels at which they operate, are also an integral element for effective advocacy, information exchange, collaboration and elevating the level, including by adequate support with resources, is a key contribution to women's meaningful participation and the sustainability of women's movements and organizations.

#### **Actions to be taken by the United Nations Security Council**

8. **Security Council mandates should continue to explicitly recognize women's contribution to the peace and political processes, and more clearly call peace operations to support women's meaningful participation and leadership in all stages of DDR and SSR processes.** Clear and consistent directions to peacekeeping operations on the need to ensure women's meaningful participation in SSR and DDR processes is vital for the United Nations to be more effective in implementation through dedicated financing, monitoring and reporting. United Nations peacekeeping missions are guided by Security Council mandates and data reveals these are uneven with regard to their references to the WPS commitments.

## Annex 1: List of Participants

### Central African Republic

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### Colombia

#### *United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia*

6. Devanna De La Puente, Senior Gender Advisor

#### *Women representatives*

7. Victoria Sandino, Honorable Senator of the Congress of Colombia and Head of FARC Gender Committee

### Mali

#### *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali*

8. Diane Nya Kadji, SSR Officer
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12. Nema Sagara, Colonel-major

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13. Geeta Kuttiparambil, Deputy Chief, Gender Unit (Office of the Under-Secretary-General, Gender Unit)
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15. Germana Dalberto, SSR Officer (SSR Unit)
16. Mario Nascimento, DDR Policy and Planning Officer (Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions/DDR Section)

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17. Callum Watson, Project Coordinator, Gender and Security Division

### Facilitator

18. Cate Buchanan, Consultant

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