



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka  
to the United Nations

Canada

## Concept note

### Ending SEA and Increasing Women in UN Peace Keeping – What more can be done?

#### Objective

Increasing women's inclusion in peacekeeping, and ending the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation have been two of the more challenging aspects of the 17-year-old Women, Peace and Security agenda. Despite recent efforts and policy developments, transformative, holistic action to comprehensively address the UN's SEA problem and preserve the ethos of peacekeeping remains absent.

This event, hosted by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations together with the Canadian Permanent mission to UN, Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), seeks to explore what additional critical and catalytic steps the UN and its member states can take to ensure SEA becomes a thing of the past, including via:

- Sharing best practices from the ground of the transformative work of female peacekeepers
- Strengthening collaboration between civil society, the UN and member states
- Putting forward concrete recommendations, on what can be done to ensure that peacekeeping practices and the ethos of peacekeeping becomes a model for effective “community security”

#### Background

In 1993, only one percent of all deployed uniformed personnel were women. By 2012, women made up three percent of military and 10 percent of police personnel. Currently, women account for almost 30 percent of the international civilians working in peacekeeping and special protection missions. The percentage of female Military Experts to missions has doubled from 3.6 percent in 2014 to 7.5 percent in 2017. Research also shows that women peacekeepers can deliver results that men cannot. Women are often successful in building relationships with local communities and in serving as role models, inspiring other women to join security services. Finally, an increase in the numbers of women in peacekeeping could be a catalytic means of resolving the pernicious problem of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

At the policy level, new developments seek to address the pressing issue of SEA. Building on the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security, UNSCR 2106 encourages troop- and police-contributing countries to increase the number of women recruited and deployed in peace operations. UNSCR 2122 encourages troop- and police-contributing

countries to provide all military and police personnel with adequate training to carry out their responsibilities, and relevant UN entities to make available appropriate guidance or training modules. The UN has also called for more female peacekeepers to enhance the overall “holistic” approach to current peacekeeping operations. UN Women has supported the Female Military Officers Course as a good practice.

Additionally, in March 2016, with the United States leading the way, the Security Council adopted its first resolution (UNSCR 2272) explicitly tackling the peacekeepers’ sexual exploitation issue. In September 2017, the Secretary-General called on Member States to sign on to the Voluntary Compact on Elimination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). With this new compact, UN reform on the horizon, and the SG’s renewed commitment to gender parity within the UN system, the moment is ripe to bring about significant change in the context of peacekeeping as well.

As such, it is timely to explore what additional critical and catalytic steps the UN and its 193 member states can take to ensure that SEA really is a thing of the past, and that women who join peacekeeping missions have the true power to effect change on the ground. The recommendations highlighted in June 2017, by the Foreign Affairs article “The UN’s Peacekeepers Sexual Assault Problem: How to End it Once and For All” will be among the ideas discussed.

To highlight the transformative effect of women in peacekeeping and put forward some concrete recommendations for action, the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations together with the Canadian Permanent mission to UN, Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) will host this event to mark the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of SCR 1325.

The panelists and the audience at this event will have an opportunity to engage with peacekeeping and peacebuilding experts from civil society, the United Nations and member states, and explore and discuss concrete recommendations such as forming women peacekeeping training institutes, increasing robust training and the importance of building trust with host communities.

#### References:

- Alexandra Ivanovic (2014). *Why the United Nations Needs More Female Peacekeepers*, available at: <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-un-needs-more-female-peacekeepers.html>
- Sanam Naraghi Anderlini (2017). *UN Peacekeepers' Sexual Assault Problem*, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2017-06-09/un-peacekeepers-sexual-assaultproblem>

