

## **Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence**

### **“Women, Peace and Conflict” 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

#### **Statement on the Conference**

This year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the ambition behind the UDHR of creating a world where the dignity and humanity of each and every person would be respected by all nations is undermined by the systematic violence that women face in conflict situations on a daily basis. Denying women the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives, denying women protection from acts of violence, denying women justice and dignity, these are all violations of their human rights that need to be addressed. The implementation of this United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR1325) is vital for the realisation of these human rights and ultimately for the achievement of the promise of human rights for all.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008 the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence hosted a conference “Women, Peace and Conflict”. The conference was attended by international and Irish women’s rights activists, representatives from Irish government agencies, including the Irish Defence Forces and Department of Foreign Affairs, and representatives from Irish and international civil society organisations.

The conference heard how UNSCR 1325 commits the international community to protect women in conflict especially from gender based violence; to end impunity for rape and sexual violence; to facilitate women’s participation in conflict prevention and peace-building; and to ensure a gendered approach to peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

The conference heard from women around the globe who have been affected by conflict, including from Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, and Liberia. They told of the impact of conflict on the lives of women and the experience of women in processes of conflict resolution and peace-building including barriers to women’s participation. They also demonstrated how even in the most difficult of circumstance women can and will come together to look for solutions and to work with each other towards conflict resolution and peace building. The conference heard how the Netherlands is implementing resolution 1325 and also of progress at a UN and international level.

The Irish Government has identified Resolution 1325 as one of six priorities of its Conflict Resolution Unit and is in the process of developing a national action plan including consultations with representative of women’s organisations.

The Consortium’s report *Stepping up Ireland's Response to Women, Peace and Security: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* was launched at the conference and provides guidance for the process of developing a national action plan, its contents and its implementation.

The messages of the conference were clear:

To all parties to conflict resolution, and peace building including the UN, the EU, AU, governments, civil society and parties to conflict:

***Do not forget women; women are agents for positive and sustainable change.***

***Paper promises have no value unless followed up by sustained action and accountability***

***It is critical that substantive actions are taken urgently as womens' rights continue to be violated in a systematic manner on a daily basis.***

And to women everywhere:

***Never give up because "what doesn't seem possible is possible".***

The participants in this conference:

- Recognise that the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is crucial to addressing gender based violence and consider that the development of national action plans for UNSCR 1325 is necessary to translate the principles of UNSCR 1325 into action; and believe that women who have experienced situations of conflict need to be involved in developing national action plans.
- Welcome the Irish government's commitment to developing and implementing a national action plan for UNSCR 1325 and recognise that this is a unique opportunity for Ireland to adopt a progressive and inclusive approach to UNSCR 1325; in particular through the establishment of the 'twinning' process between Ireland and Liberia and Timor-Leste.
- Call on the Irish Government to provide strong political leadership and commitment, to develop an ambitious national action plan but with specific, realistic and time-bound targets; to allocate adequate human and financial resources; and to establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Call for a consultative process in drafting the Irish national action plan through structured consultations with stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, and academics. In particular the Irish national action plan should be informed by the experiences and expertise of women who have been affected by conflict, including women's organisations in Northern Ireland and grass roots women's rights organisations in the South.
- Call on the government and NGOs to promote and support women's human rights organisations.