

Written evidence submitted by the SecurityWomen (INR0032)

1. Introduction

A priority for UK foreign policy strategy from the perspective of SecurityWomen (SW) is the UK's place internationally as one of the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council and in particular, the UK's role as penholder¹ for Women, Peace and Security (WPS). We see this as an opportunity for the UK to be a leader and influence global affairs². The UK holds the Security Council remit for Peacekeeping which is a vital tool to hold the peace in conflict ridden and post-conflict countries.

The importance of global cooperation to tackle and maintain peace in parts of the world cannot be overstated as a way of ensuring in turn the UK's safety and security. Contribution to UN Peacekeeping can be seen as an opportunity to illustrate the UK's global leadership and to be a role model to other countries³. Its contribution needs to be seen as an essential part of the role and responsibilities of the UK military and police, and SW would like to see more public communication to this effect as part of a wider strategic strand in the forthcoming Integrated Review.

An important element of peacekeeping is the participation of women. As a means of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building, gender equality is powerful and transformative, and facilitates the reduction of violence within communities. Safety and security is not gender neutral and should not be treated as such.

2. Peacekeeping

The drive to move towards gender parity in all aspects of peacekeeping should be front and centre of the UK's approach within the Security Council and, not only to push, encourage and support the UN's efforts in this regard, but to challenge and drive for greater commitment from all TCCs and PCCs⁵. The overall percentage of women's participation in UN peacekeeping missions has increased from under 4 percent for military peacekeepers in 2015 to 5.3 percent in January 2020; and for female police peacekeepers, from 10 percent to 14.9 percent⁶.

Targets have been set as part of the UN's Gender Parity Strategy for Uniformed Personnel, with a steady climb to overall targets for female police peacekeepers to be 25 percent by 2028, and female military peacekeepers to be 15 percent by 2028. However, these are seen

¹ See ref to 'penholders': <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/the-penholder-system.php> accessed 20 April 2020

² And to achieve the implementation of the SDGs and 2030 agenda

³ Diplomatic leadership (FCO foreign policy priority outcome 4) FCO Single Departmental Plan 2019/20: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-and-commonwealth-office-single-departmental-plan/foreign-and-commonwealth-office-single-departmental-plan-2019-20> accessed 20 April 2020

⁴ UN SG's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) launched 28 March 2018

⁵ UN SG's Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, dated 16 August 2018: see point 8 ref to WPS

⁶ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>

as modest. A more ambitious gender balance is possible within countries like the UK and we would like to see the UK leading in this regard, in particular to place more emphasis on increasing women's representation in leadership positions⁷.

As part of the UK's role as penholder of WPS, there is a need to ensure that gender is properly mainstreamed throughout UN peacekeeping mandates and not seen as just an add-on issue⁸. The UK has a responsibility to consult with relevant UN agencies, civil society groups, and other stakeholders to establish common language and approach to ensure that the position of women is always considered in every discussion/debate/mandate/resolution affecting peacekeeping deployment and operations.

WPS needs to become institutionally embedded. As stated in a recent DPO document, *'Peace operations are uniquely positioned to advance gender equality and WPS standards given their mandates, extensive field presence and strategic access to senior leadership of national governments.'*⁹ To reiterate, women should have opportunity and access to act and be seen in leadership positions not only, for example, as cooks or administrators, but in strategically important positions contributing to and influencing overall operations. This can only come about by significantly increasing the sheer numbers of women in military and police peacekeeping.

Within UN peacekeeping, there is a requirement for mixed patrols, consisting of men and women, which act as teams of men and women to conduct community-based patrols, as seen, for instance, in the Central African Republic¹⁰. A step forward would be if the UK could create a mechanism (that would act as a model for every TCC) that would result in, when UK peacekeepers are deployed, there will be **at least 2** women in every platoon/patrol. This would facilitate the much needed formation of mixed patrols which UN DPO is so keen to achieve. As an example, Zambia has shown its capability in managing to establish mixed patrols¹¹¹².

3. UK's approach

The UK needs to view and be clear on its own commitments. Internationally, the UK has taken a strong lead on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, and in 2014, the UK hosted the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI). The focus on PSVI has ensured that the concept is recognised globally and has established a Protocol for the process of ensuring justice for victims, and perpetrators are held to account. This approach has been followed with the aim of reducing the impact of conflict on women; it has, however established a focus to the detriment of other important aspects of the WPS agenda. Having

⁷ See article re women's leadership in CAR: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/directory-of-female-experts-within-car-defence-and-security-forces-to-boost-women-leadership> accessed 7 May 2020

⁸ Page 8: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/prioritisation_sequencing_mandates_report.pdf accessed 30 April 2020

⁹ Page 3: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_wps_2019_digital_1.pdf accessed 4 May 2020

¹⁰ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-news/brazilian-officer-stellar-example-of-why-more-women-are-needed-un-peacekeeping> accessed 7 May 2020

¹¹ See: <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/07/09/un-thanks-zambia-over-peacekeeping-troops/>

¹² Point 6: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/under-secretary-general-peacekeeping-operations-mr-jean-pierre-lacroix-chiefs-of-defence-conference>

been the focus since 2014, SW would like to see a change, with more work being done, and resources committed, on longer-term gender equality strategic planning and operations. We recognise the importance of the involvement of women in providing security for communities and in particular women and girls in conflict situations.

Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative (PMSR) on PSVI chairs a cross-Whitehall ministerial committee and also a steering board with NGOs, academia and experts. When it was first announced in January 2018, it promised to be more wide-ranging within the WPS agenda. SW would like to see both the committee and steering board cover WPS more widely, in particular, the 'Participation' aspect of UNSCR 1325. SW welcomes regular meetings with civil society representatives and members of GAPS on WPS with FCO Minister, Lord Ahmed (May 2019) and previously with Gavin Williamson, then Minister for Defence (July 2018). The UK could share this as best practice to other countries.

The UK's National Action Plan on WPS (NAP) has as its Strategic Outcome 2: Peacekeeping¹³. Within this section of the NAP, it states that *'the UK will support... increased numbers of women deployed in peace operations'*¹⁴. A shift in focus will enable more proactive action towards achieving gender equality in peacekeeping. A focus here means that this approach to WPS, instead of being 'after the event' supporting vulnerable women, it is more about the empowerment of women and girls, from the perspective of female peacekeepers and for the women within the communities in which they serve. This applies to military as well as police peacekeepers.

When it comes to law enforcement, the power instilled in security institutions cannot be purely male; women should be seen as equal partners within teams and as leaders, and as a means to reduce the risk of violent conflict and fragility. As stated in the UK NAP, Strategic Outcome 5 is about Security and Justice. What better way of ensuring the improvement of security and justice for women and girls in terms of quality and access, than increasing the participation of women in policing and security sector organisations. This comes under the auspices of Security Sector Reform (SSR). The increased participation of women needs to be properly supported in terms of ensuring a safe and enabling working environment, with access to sufficient and on-going training. The employment of women in security makes a more powerful statement, and is operationally more effective¹⁵, than attempts to achieve 'the integration of gender perspectives'¹⁶ through a wholly male security institution. It is also important for local women to see female peacekeepers if they are to come forward and be engaged.

In supporting women in peacekeeping, SW would like to see the UK government initiate, lead and support the training of international female military officers, especially from those

¹³ This states that *'a gender perspective is consistently applied in the setting and implementation of international standards and mandates for peace operations'*.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-nap-on-women-peace-and-security-wps-2018-to-2022-report-to-parliament-december-2018>

¹⁵ As above, page 16

¹⁶ As above

countries which are lacking in the provision of staff training for female officers. SW applauds the UK's financial support to the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations¹⁷

In 2017, the FCO established the role of Special Envoy for Gender Equality. We would like to see this role either expanded, or a new role established - the Ambassador for WPS - in order to have more responsibility and accountability for WPS, with an across-departments remit to enable better joined up working and strategic planning in the FCO, MOD, Home Office, Cabinet Office and DFID. In having a more 'helicopter' role, the Ambassador would ensure that each department was contributing to the overall strategy. Currently, for instance, there is little evidence that the Home Office is actively working with the FCO on supporting the increase in numbers of women deployed in peace operations: there are no UN female police peacekeepers from the UK.

Also in 2017, SW welcomed the establishment of the Women, Peace and Security Chiefs of Defence Network, by the UK and Bangladesh and Canada, which brings together powerful military leaders to discuss the challenges and best practice for implementing WPS.

4. UK contribution

The promotion of more women in the security services starts from how to attract young women and girls to want to establish a career within the Armed forces or Police services. The 2019 Review of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations by the MOD indicates that diversity and inclusion is a major issue, with *'an overwhelming majority of retired, male military (typically Army) personnel on boards and in senior management positions'* and that female staff *'feel their promotion prospects are severely limited as senior posts were entirely the preserve of ex-military, male officers'*¹⁸. This is not encouraging for girls and young women who wish to experience a little of what being in the armed forces might entail. Role models are vitally important for women and girls if they are to step up. SW is embarking this year on a research project to explore the attitudes of young people, in particular girls, regarding the role of the Armed Forces in the UK and likelihood of pursuing a military career, and will encompass the role of uniformed youth organisations.

The MOD has gone some way to improve working conditions for women through the Armed Forces (flexible working) Act 2018. With its aim of increasing retention of personnel, it provides a more attractive career choice for women in particular, since part-time work and shortened periods away from family is now an available option. The UK however needs to consider a range of options with the object of promoting and achieving a better gender balance, such as:

- Arguments for use of quotas/targets
- Creating larger recruitment pools and sustainable career pipelines, ensuring women-friendly recruitment messaging

¹⁷ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/elsie_initiative-initiative_elsie.aspx?lang=eng

¹⁸

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874779/FINAL_RFCA_Review_2019_Report-OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE.pdf

- Strategic planning to work towards the gender tipping point - *each rank* in the armed forces to have at least 30 percent women by 2025
- Specific recommendations for changing working culture - flexible working, shared parental leave etc with targets (women friendly work places)
- Changing patriarchal cultures
- Strategies for involving men to champion gender equality
- Creating a mentoring scheme: take 10 women from different junior ranks in the military and pair with 10 senior male military officers – will enable a transfer of information as to the lived experience for women.

The following is stated in the FCO department report 2019/20:

“in the run up to the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security in 2020, we will work to strengthen implementation of UNSCR 1325 with a focus on promoting women’s meaningful inclusion in peace processes and increasing support to women resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace at the grassroots level”.

SW would like to see a specific UK commitment to promoting the participation of women as peacekeepers in this anniversary year for UNSCR 1325. Progress is being made¹⁹ but it is slow and every opportunity should be taken to publicise women’s critical role in peacekeeping.

5. Recommendations:

1. UK to use its position at the Security Council as a global leader for WPS.
2. The UK to broaden its approach on WPS and shift its strategic focus on PSVI.
3. Place the WPS agenda as a top priority in the new FCO strategy. Become gender champions.
4. Greater public messaging on the importance of UK’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping.
5. Create a mechanism for mixed patrols to ensure **at least 2** women in every platoon/patrol deployed on peace operations, as a model for other countries and moving towards gender parity.
6. Establish the role of WPS Ambassador which will provide the necessary leadership for all Whitehall departments to work domestically and internationally together to achieve the UK NAP.
7. Fund and expand training of female military officers
8. Work in partnership with civil society on WPS and ensure regular meetings. To provide as best practice to other countries.
9. Grow UK’s talent and consider strategies to improve the gender balance in UK security services and the development of future female peacekeepers.
10. Ensure the implementation and development of the National Action Plan for WPS is fully embedded in the UK Foreign Policy planning.

¹⁹ https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/191101_a4p_achievements_one_pager.pdf

SecurityWomen is an advocacy and research-based non-profit organisation, calling for greater awareness of gender equality issues within the security sector globally. It promotes the inclusion of more women in the security sector - policing, private security, armed forces, cybersecurity and peacekeeping - which globally are overwhelmingly male dominated. The premise being that better security for all parts of society can be created through a better gender balance, and the likelihood of a less violent and conflict-ridden world.

SecurityWomen was established in 2015, gained UK registered Charity status in 2016 and US 501(c)(3) non-profit listing in 2018.

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