



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The Women’s Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the region

Annual Progress Report
October 2016 – October 2017

Introduction

The Women’s Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework is a key strategic tool for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes Region (O/SESG-GL) to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the Great Lakes Region. The Platform was launched in January 2014 by the O/SESG-GL and builds on the momentum that was already being generated by women’s groups and women’s advocacy movements to claim justice, peace and security for all citizens in the Great Lakes region. The purpose of the Platform is to assist women’s organizations to actively contribute to the implementation of the PSC Framework by supporting them to strengthen their collective action, provide grants for relevant projects, and enable women to play an active and sustained role in the overall peace process.

Since its inception, the Women’s Platform (WP) has contributed to building a network with governments of the region, regional and civil society organizations, UN and donor countries, to ensure the implementation of the WPS agenda. It also generated positive results at local levels through the grant making process with the Global Fund for Women. While the WP has generated considerable benefit to its target audience and created the opportunity for O/SESG-GL to engage other stakeholders, the Special Envoy intends to increase its strategic benefit by further focusing outputs on political advocacy, as reflected in the final communique of the 8th High level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM), held in Brazzaville on 19 October 2017.

This report provides an update on initiatives undertaken through the WP over the last year and provides recommendations on the way forward to advance the relevant pillars of the WP, including: **(i) Advocacy**: monitoring and advocacy for the PSC Framework as well as regional and national plans of action under Security Council Resolution 1325; **(ii) Gender Mainstreaming**: combatting violence against women and supporting women affected by violence; **(iii) Economic Empowerment**: women livelihoods and developments.

1. Political Advocacy

Monitoring and advocacy for the PSC Framework as well as regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

Despite the endorsement of the Goma Declaration and the pertinent recommendations¹, challenges remain in forging a common strategy to support WPS in the region. Similarly, the development of a regional plan of action in support of UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000), to which the member states have subscribed for the participation of men and women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and mediation, is yet to be fully effective. Women in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in Burundi, DRC, CAR, and South Sudan, continue to experience serious challenges in participating in their respective country's political and dialogue processes. Additional information can be found at Annex A

In October 2016, the O/SESG-GL carried out a fact-finding mission to the DRC and Rwanda to conduct a situational analysis and needs assessment of the implementation of the WPS agenda in the two countries. The findings of the mission revealed a need to increase the focus on advancing the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on – women's political participation in the region, and prompted the development of the new strategy for the implementation of the WP.

In November 2016, O/SESG supported a woman's group from the DRC North Kivu develop a strategy to increase their participation in the national political sphere, and in particular in the country's political dialogue and elections. They developed a guiding strategic document for women's actions, including engagement with Government political and legal actors responsible for the advancement of women's political participation.

In November 2016, O/SESG-GL provided technical and financial support to the strategic meeting of the Regional Women's Framework (RWF) in Khartoum, Sudan. The meeting adopted a three-year plan of operations and designed a budget for the establishment of the Forum Secretariat in Kigali, Rwanda. The next critical step for the RWF, in working towards the advancement of women in the region, is the effective establishment of its Secretariat; this is

¹ *To the signatories member states to provide financial and technical support to the Regional Women's Forum and the implementation of its 2017-2018 strategic plan, and ensure the participation of women in the meetings of the TSC and the ROM; Ministers, regional and international organizations to mobilize and allocate more technical and financial resources to strengthen women's technical capacity to enable their effective participation in the political and peace process; the AU, ICGLR, SADC and member countries: to implement regional and continental policies (Maputo protocol, Gender policy of the AU) to ensure the effective and efficient participation of women in mediation, negotiation and conflict management processes by setting up a policy monitoring and evaluation mechanism.*

possible due to the signing of the Agreement between ICGLR and the Rwandese Government, which has offered to host the Forum for a period of 5 years. A key challenge identified is the need for increased financial resources to support the Forum's operations and programme of activities.

As part of his efforts to promote and support Women's Advocacy, the UN Special Envoy convened the regional Global Open Days on WPS in Goma, DRC from 28 January to 2 February 2017. The meeting offered the opportunity for 30 women leaders and advocates from the region to strengthen their leadership capacity through a two-day training in leadership and politics that allowed them to share their experiences regarding effective participation in political and peace processes, and to assess the implementation of the women's political participation pillar of the UNSCR 1325 (2000) in their respective countries. The workshop was followed by a high-level dialogue on 2 February 2017, attended by both the UN Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative for the DRC, together with representatives of the ICGLR, the AU and Ministers with leading gender portfolios in Burundi, the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan.

As a follow-up to the recommendations made at the Global Open Days, a representative of the ICGLR RWF attended the 16th TSC meeting held in Nairobi in February 2017. Similarly, from 7 to 10 September 2017, two representatives of the ICGLR RWF travelled with TSC members to the eastern DRC to engage with local authorities and undertook, along with TSC members, a field visit to Kisangani, Kanyabayonga and Walungu to meet the leaders of FDLR ex-combatants on cantonment sites. As a result of the visit, the TSC recommended to the Heads of State at the 8th ROM meeting to take decisive actions to accelerate the repatriation of the disarmed combatants and their dependents within the shortest timeframe possible, and to address as a priority, the situation of the women and children in the FDLR transit camps in eastern DRC. It should be noted that the conditions experienced by women and children were deemed to be of particular concern due to the overcrowding and lack of educational facilities.

The Heads of States, and in their joint deliberation, further encouraged the O/SESG-GL, in consultation with the ICGLR Secretariat, SADC and the AU, to convene regular meetings to review progress in the implementation of the Declaration of the Women's Platform of the PSC Framework.

2. Gender Mainstreaming

In April 2017 O/SESG-GL undertook to support ICGLR Executive Secretary in developing a Regional Action Plan (RAP) on the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000). The plan is a joint project undertaken by the ICGLR and the Lusaka based ICGLR 'Levy Mwanawasa Centre' for democracy and good governance, with the technical and financial support of O/SESG. The RAP will provide a broad framework at the regional level to assist Member States to accelerate the implementation of their National Action Plans.

3. Economic Empowerment - Women's Livelihoods and Developments

The focus over the reporting period for grant distribution has been on the DRC and Burundi, where more than USD 100,000 has been allocated to projects on peacebuilding, the fight against SGBV, transformative social norms, monitoring of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and conflict mediation. The various projects supported will be evaluated through a joint field assessment mission in the eastern DRC. Currently, O/SESG-GL, UN Women and Global Fund for Women participate in the selection of 3-4 new grantees, focusing on the support of previously unfunded grassroots women's organizations in the DRC and Burundi to disburse up to USD 70,000 in small grants, which should be implemented before the end of 2018.

A total of 40 grants were made with funds that came through the O/SESG-GL, some of which were complimented with funds raised by GFW. Five grants were made in 2016 with the second round of funds from the Irish Government that came through the O/SESG, and two grants made in 2017 with the O/SESG-GL coordinated funds. Starting in 2016, some of the grants made with funds from the O/SESG-GL were complimented with other funds raised by GFW for the WP.

Recommendations and Activities for the Way Forward

1. Proposed Governance Structures to Support WPS

As part of 5th Anniversary review of the PSC Framework, refocus the outputs of the reconfigured Advisory Board. This would include the requirement to assess the role of the board, the strategies used to-date in advancing WPS, including understanding their impact, addressing improved implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the Goma Declaration. A face-to-face meeting of the Advisory Board would take place over 22-23 February in Nairobi, preceded by a technical level meeting on 21 February.

The expanded the Advisory Board with members from the World Bank, African Development Bank and selected members of the African women leadership network shall help increase focus on policy and concerted strategy issues to advance the political track of WPS.

Implementing the Regional Framework for Women's Advancement through the establishment of a Regional Steering Committee (RSC) to coordinate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan in accordance with UNSCR 1325 (2000): The RSC would be composed of: Members from a range of institutions, including Ministers in charge of gender affairs of signatory countries, Members of the Parliament, women's organizations, regional organizations (PSC Framework Guarantors), UN Agencies (UN Women, UNDP) and identified experts. The responsibilities of the RSC would be to increase leadership on the implementation project of the

Regional Action Plan and to ensure the liaison with national institutions and regional organizations to coordinate the activities as well as with the TSC and the ROM of the PSC Framework. Greater efforts are required to ensure inclusivity in-line with UNSCR 1325 (2000) and other regional instruments.

2. Increasing Women's Advocacy in the Region

Initiate a regional review of gender empowerment, via the ICGLR Women's Forum, the O/SESG WP and the instruments, including 1325 and Goma Declaration, in coordination with the AU and UN Women, to be discussed at the Advisory Board, submitted to the Ministers and to the ROM subsequently.

Strategies including the participation of women in peace processes in the region; joint mission initiatives and good profiling; the first ladies and the role they can play to further women, peace and security shall be supported.

Organize a joint solidarity mission of the Advisory Board Members to Burundi, CAR, DRC and South Sudan. Date to be discussed and agreed at the 9th Advisory Board meeting.

Undertake continuous advocacy for accountability of sexual and gender based violence in the Great Lakes region and using evidence based data, call on member states to accelerate implementation of the Kampala Declaration for addressing impunity for SGBV in the region.

Support solidarity missions of the RWF and eminent women in the region to trouble spots to meet with heads of governments to raise awareness on the impact of conflict on women and to negotiate space for their meaningful in all peace building processes.

Encourage delegated national institutions to further strengthen their role in the implementation of the Goma Declaration.

Include gender and women's rights issues in all political statements on peace and security in the region.

The guarantors including UN, AU, ICGLR, SADC will pursue joint advocacy efforts for women issues and will continue to send strong messages to the stakeholders that are interested in furthering women issues. This will include, among others, undertaking a dedicated visit to refugee camps to look specifically at WPS issues, and having dedicated meetings with women on site to improve situational awareness in relation to the conditions for women and children in

camps in the Eastern DRC, and assess opportunities for their reintegration. This activity follows up on the visit of the PSC Framework Technical Support Committee (TSC) in the eastern DRC, in September 2017, as part of efforts to address the situation of ex-combatants and their dependents.

3. Funding support

Mobilize resources to support the needs of women affected by conflict through the Women's Platform and through joint resource mobilization with other Agencies to address needs of the most vulnerable groups especially in areas of active conflict and long term displaced settlements with particular attention to building resilience of affected communities.

Assess and support the effective operationalization of the ICGLR Regional Women Forum Secretariat. Dedicate an annual national budget line to the functioning of the Secretariat work and programme of activities. Support the RWF to identify key WPS issues in the region and develop an advocacy strategy and key messages to raise awareness on these issues.

Support ICGLR in the development and implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on the implementation of Resolution 1325, which will inform the Gender Ministers meeting in Brazzaville in 2018.