

## FACT SHEET

### GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

**The Secretary-General's [Agenda for Disarmament](#)** “*Securing Our Common Future*”

prioritizes the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament and calls for Member States to incorporate gender perspectives in the development of national legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control.

Gender-responsive disarmament contributes to the **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**, including the advancement of Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. It also supports **the Beijing Platform for Action**, adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, which highlights the effects of armed conflict on women as a critical area of concern.

#### Why is gender important to disarmament?

Women, men, boys and girls are affected differently by conflict and issues related to weapons. Therefore, incorporating gender perspectives into all disarmament policies, projects, processes and analysis is crucial.

There is also wide recognition that equal participation of men and women is vital to the maintenance of sustainable peace and security. Engaging women in disarmament and arms control, including decision-making, is a catalyst for more effective action.

Despite increased focus and Member States' repeated support for equal participation, women remain underrepresented in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy. Women make up a third of participants in larger meetings and only about one fifth in small forums<sup>1</sup>.

#### Where are gender perspectives addressed?

There are various ongoing efforts to better understand and to incorporate gender perspectives in multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament frameworks. A growing number of Member States are highlighting the gendered impact of weapons and welcoming both the increased mainstreaming of gender perspectives in disarmament and the strengthened participation of women in disarmament processes.

The number of General Assembly (GA) resolutions and discussions on disarmament that incorporate gender references is increasing and cover numerous areas including nuclear weapons, biological weapons, cluster munitions, ammunition stockpiles, small arms and light weapons (SALW), regional disarmament, disarmament machinery and youth. Seventeen of the sixty-one resolutions adopted in 2019 by the GA First Committee included direct language on gender or women, four of them for the first time. GA Resolution 65/69 (2010) and subsequent resolutions<sup>2</sup> on *Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control* recognize the need to facilitate and increase the participation of women in disarmament and promote equal opportunities in decision-making. These resolutions also encourage better understanding of the gendered impact of armed conflict.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and nine subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), significant efforts have been made to promote gender equality and to strengthen women's participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle.<sup>3</sup> Despite progress, obstacles and challenges still persist and prevent the full implementation of the WPS agenda<sup>4</sup>. In 2019, about 41 percent of UN Member States had adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security, of which 30 percent include references to disarmament and/or arms control. Security Council Resolution 2117 (2013) on small arms urge further measures to facilitate women's full and meaningful participation in processes

<sup>1</sup> Read more in the publication [Still behind the curve](#) by UNIDIR (2019)

<sup>2</sup> 67/48, 68/33, 69/61, 71/56 and 73/46

<sup>3</sup> Resolutions 1820 (2009) 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015) includes language on SALW, 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).

<sup>4</sup> See page 14 in the [Global Study on implementation of UNSCR 1325](#)

related to SALW and encourage Member States to strengthen the collection of sex-disaggregated data to better understand the impact of illicit SALW on women.

During the review cycle on the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*, States Parties endorsed the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men as well as noting the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women<sup>5</sup>.

The *UN Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms and light weapons* adopted in 2001 expresses concern over the devastating consequences of the illicit trade in small arms for women, and in the Third Review Conference of States on the PoA in 2018<sup>6</sup> States agreed to promote the full participation of women in mechanisms relating to the implementation of the PoA and to take account the differing impacts of the illicit trade in SALW on women, men, girls and boys in policy and programme design. The *Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)* includes a legally-binding provision requiring States Parties to consider gender-based violence (GBV) as an essential criterion in their export assessments of conventional weapons and ammunition.

Civil society, including women-led organizations, play a central role in disarmament and arms control, providing important insights on gender perspectives and ensuring that the voices of the entire population are represented in discussions.

While several aspects of gender and disarmament remain unexplored, many dimensions have been researched in the past years, including through gender studies published by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)<sup>7</sup>.

### What is the role of UNODA?



High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu delivers [remarks](#) at a side event of the Third Preparatory Committee Session of the 2020 Review Cycle of the NPT entitled, “When participation becomes meaningful: advancing the conversation on gender diversity in the NPT” in May 2019.

**The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)**, through implementation of its gender mainstreaming action plan (2016), furthers disarmament objectives through gender-responsive programmes, activities and policies. UNODA analyses and highlights the linkages between the promotion of gender equality and disarmament; incorporates gender perspectives into all its activities; and advocates for equal participation in disarmament discussions.

In collaboration with civil society and through the support of Member States and partner organizations, projects and trainings are developed to support gender mainstreaming of disarmament and arms control policies and programmes. Participation of women is emphasized in workshops, scholarships and other activities organized by the UNODA. UNODA also monitors and

records sex-disaggregated data from disarmament fora to track participation and trends.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, is a vocal advocate for strengthening gender perspectives in disarmament, including through effective participation of women in decision-making and increased recognition of the importance of gender considerations in disarmament and arms control, including in her remarks at multilateral meetings, speeches and in several op-eds. The High Representative is an [International Gender Champion](#)<sup>8</sup> and is committed to raising global awareness about the gendered impact of weapons, working on gender equality within UNODA and ensuring gender balance in Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs).

<sup>5</sup> The *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)* also recognises the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men and acknowledges the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls.

<sup>6</sup> Read more in the outcome [document](#) of the Review Conference

<sup>7</sup> Visit the [UNIDIR Gender & Disarmament Hub](#) for access to all publications

<sup>8</sup> Read more about female UN leaders in disarmament [here](#).