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Security Nexus Conversation

UNSCR 1325 ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interviewed by Dr. Saira Yamin*

Keynote Interview with Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury

Initiator of the precursor decision leading to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security as the Security Council President in March 2000

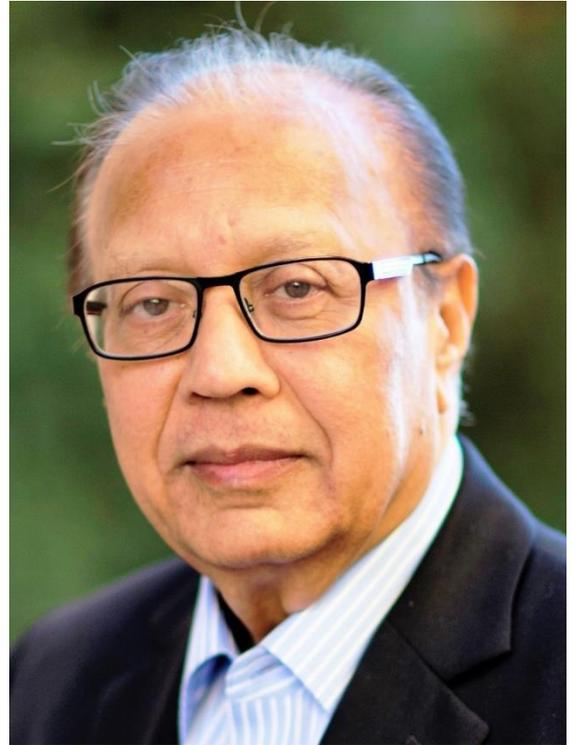
Transcript prepared by Ms. Kamaile Patton, DKI APCSS Intern

The full video podcast interview is available [at this link](#).

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Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations (2002-2007) and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to UN (1996-2001), Ambassador Chowdhury has been an internationally recognized champion of women's equality and empowerment for many decades. As the President of the Security Council in March 2000, he took the pioneering initiative for the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security, creating a crucial legacy of inclusion of women's equality in the realm of international peace and security. He believes strongly that the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is the best blueprint available at the country level to make progress in ensuring gender equality and women's equal participation at all decision-making levels. He also believes that the civil society has a major role to play in the implementation of 1325 at both national and global levels.

Ambassador Chowdhury's contributions in the sphere of peace, women's rights and human security are vast, but among his most notable recognitions are the U Thant Peace Award, UNESCO Gandhi Gold Medal for Culture of Peace, Spirit of the UN Award, University of Massachusetts Boston Chancellor's Medal for Global Leadership for Peace, 2018 Global Women's Peace Award and 2020 Robert Muller Global Peace Award as United Nations Global Peace Leader. Ambassador Chowdhury is a proud feminist and fervent defender of the integral role of gender equality in making the world a better place to live for all.



Summary: This interview featuring Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury offers a critical assessment of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security twenty years after it was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council. Drawing on his pioneering role in this effort, Ambassador Chowdhury shares his insights on the genesis of the landmark resolution, the obstacles in its path, and milestones reached. He notes, in particular, the instrumental role of civil society in advancing this global agenda and the importance of National Action Plans to further advance women's increased and meaningful participation in all spheres of peace and conflict. He suggests that a worthwhile pursuit of security by international stakeholders depends on their willingness to embrace human security, where all activities of the government are focused on the welfare of individuals and communities.

Saira Yamin (SY): This year, the international community celebrates the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Please tell us about your role in this resolution's passage and what motivated you to advance this global agenda?

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury (AKC): Let me trace back the history of adoption of the UNSCR 1325. It took place, as you know very well, on 31 October 2000. Bangladesh became a non-permanent member in January 2000 for two years. I assumed the Security Council Presidency in March 2000. For Bangladesh's membership of the United Nations (UN), I had been very closely involved. I came to New York City in 1972, sent by my government of the newly independent country of Bangladesh, to work for our membership of the UN. I thought that it is very important for a poor, powerless country to establish Bangladesh's profile with issues that will be of direct relevance to itself. I thought big issues and big politics are not possible for a country like Bangladesh. I considered human development, issues involving children, women, human rights and human security as very important. However, I also got very involved in population issues, as Bangladesh was a highly populous country.

Women's central role in all these areas became very apparent to me and I became very engaged in women's equality and rights issues, as well as in the rights of children, in particular the rights of girls. Women's and girls' issues from that time onwards became my passion and focus as a Bangladesh representative to the UN. When I became Ambassador in 1996, I thought this should be the center of my work, and I followed this direction because the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) had taken place in Beijing the year before. I was very impressed by the focus on women's equality and rights - and also on their participation. I thought it was a wonderful development and began to discuss it with my colleagues in the Security Council, emphasizing the importance of Beijing's agenda on women's role in and contributions to peace and security. Why couldn't we support it in the Security Council's work, I questioned, but everybody felt it was not possible. So, until 2000 when the opportunity came, I continued to lobby with my colleagues in the Security Council.

In March 2000, as the Security Council President, I decided that the time was right to do what I had been advocating for long. So, I announced on the First of March that we will have a resolution on women, peace and security -but then again, it was difficult with most of the Council members to accept. Firstly, there was indifference; secondly, there was disinterest; and thirdly, there was political pressure. They felt it was a "soft" issue and belonged to the General Assembly rather than the Security Council where "hardcore" security issues were addressed. However, I maintained that women's equality and women's contributions to peace and security had been very tangible, and we couldn't ignore them anymore. I kept on quoting Beijing again and again. In the meantime, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), all five of them, kept stonewalling my efforts. We therefore had to have a Plan B. I was rather hasty perhaps in announcing that a resolution should be ready on 8 March, International Women's Day. This timeline only gave me one week after assumption of the Presidency to prepare all 14 other members of the UNSC. If I had suggested announcing that the resolution would be adopted on the last day of my Presidency on 31 March, maybe I would have had more time to persuade them, but my own commitment became a problem for me. There was just too little time to discuss and deliberate. So, I took a risk and informed them that I would have a draft statement circulated, but if they did not agree to it by 8 March, I would announce it unilaterally as President of the Security Council. My determination to do so was evident and my statement served as a reality check to other Council members. So, on 5 and 6 March (2000), all 15 of us worked on a draft statement. It was announced by me on 8 March and that forms the basis of UNSCR 1325 as adopted. It recognizes very clearly that "Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and

men.” It also affirmed that access and participation of women in all decision-making are vital and relevant [[UN Press Release SC/6816 of 8 March 2000](#)].

As we outlined these concepts, we were able to cross a 55-year-old barrier in the Security Council profiling women only as victims of war and conflict, not supporting them as positive contributors to peace and security. That conceptual and political breakthrough allowed us to work on a resolution subsequently. It took us another eight months to work on this resolution which was adopted on the final day of October (2000) when Namibia was chairing the Security Council. So, this is the background of my involvement in the passage of UNSCR 1325. During the last 20 years, I have spent my time and energy seeing how best we can implement this resolution, and the other supporting resolutions. I have not given up just by adopting the statement with the end of Bangladesh's Presidency. I felt I must continue to play my role because I am committed to it intellectually. 8 March is the most memorable day of my life, and it will remain so forever as my contribution to humanity and to the work of the UN.

SY: Almost a dozen resolutions have been adopted to support the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda during the last twenty years. What milestones has the international community reached since then from your vantage point?

AKC: Well, to be correct numerically, there are ten resolutions including UNSCR 1325. This October, we expect another resolution, and it will be 1325 plus ten, so almost a dozen as you said. First, I should note that the actual title proposed for this resolution by us is "Women *and* Peace *and* Security" with two "ands". But one of them was dropped and a comma was added. The original intent in calling it Women *and* Peace *and* Security, however, was to frame the concept as two areas: "women" as one, and "peace and security" as the other - not as three: Women, Peace, and Security, as is now done in the context of the WPS agenda. To us, conceptually and politically, it was important to juxtapose women vis-a-vis peace and security, rather than as three elements. The moment you separate "security" from "peace", the understanding is narrowed. Your Center does it also perhaps, when you refer to "security studies". Peace and security are the mandate of the Security Council in the UN Charter. It refers to "international peace and security" and we always connect the two. So, we thought women's role vis-a-vis peace and security should be highlighted. The original title has generally been forgotten but if you research it, you will find that it is specifically mentioned in the subject titles of many resolutions. Whenever I speak about UNSCR 1325, mainly at academic institutions or civil society organizations, I like to inform them about the philosophy behind the two "ands" in the original title.

Indeed, twenty years have gone by, and if I may state in a rather dramatic fashion, these four numbers 1, 3, 2, 5 have really captured the imagination of the world in a big way. On the 10th anniversary of the resolution, an NGO from Israel produced a lapel pin, displaying the four numbers to celebrate the resolution. I was very impressed by these young women who were involved in this initiative. I was one of the first recipients of the 1325 pin and very proudly displayed it on my lapel to commemorate the occasion. The energy that 1325 has created, particularly among civil society women's organizations, is remarkable. Whenever I mention 1325, there is immediate recognition and an expression of solidarity among its supporters. No UN initiative or Security Council resolution has been able to energize civil society in this manner. UNSCR 1325 was a paradigm shift and a big step forward in terms of the conceptual

underpinnings of the UN Security Council. It set the world in the right direction on peace and security issues. It steered them away from interstate security politics and intergovernmental security politics. It upholds that women, as fifty percent of humanity, need to be involved, that women's perspective and role is generally different from the thinking of men in decision-making positions. This is a significant change. It is the first-ever international mechanism for global and national coordination and in creating opportunities for governments and international organizations to focus on women's equality of participation.

Participation is the core focus of 1325. People talk about prevention, protection, participation and promotion as the four Ps of this agenda. But when they ask me, I say "participation, participation, participation and participation" because none of the other Ps will work out unless you involve women. This is absolutely essential. We have to recognize women's equal participatory roles at all levels and types of decision-making. This is important in every sphere, not only at the secretarial level or at the bureaucratic level but also at the political and academic levels, although we have failed to take advantage of that.

Let me also mention the milestone reached in 2011, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to three women: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Tawakkul Karman and my very dear friend Leymah Gbowee, two from Africa, from Liberia; and one from the Arab world, from Yemen. In the [Nobel Peace Prize Committee's statement](#), for the first time, a UN resolution was specifically mentioned, acknowledging the conceptual breakthrough of 1325. It noted that women's participation is very important, and democracy and peace issues cannot make headway without the equality of women's participation. I felt tremendously energized by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee's pronouncement. Subsequently, from that year onwards, we have had a number of women recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. I believe these are wonderful developments, but then again, we need to do much more.

I also believe all the other resolutions in this "1325 package" - I call them "children of 1325" - provide a tremendous opportunity. These are the resolutions of the Security Council. Mind you, Security Council resolutions are absolutely obligatory on the part of countries in view of Article 25 of the UN Charter which mentions that all Member States agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. These are mandatory unlike the resolutions of the UN General Assembly which adopted the Beijing Platform or similar resolutions passed at important international conferences which are essentially recommendations. Countries failing to abide by Security Council resolution can be held accountable. So, this 1325 package of resolutions is a wonderful opportunity. If we have the right mindset, if we have the political will, we can really make a difference. This package has addressed different dimensions over the years but we should not forget the essence of 1325, the mother resolution. Unfortunately, over the years, several initiatives led by Member States with different perspectives have diluted 1325's original mandate. So, that is something civil society is very mindful about and we are trying to protect the original concept in our work by reminding the Security Council time and again.

SY: Thank you, Ambassador. Please tell us about your proposal for [Doable Fast-Track Indicators for Turning the 1325 Promise into Reality](#). This proposal came soon after the passage of the resolution. What has been accomplished and what has not?

AKC: The [Doable Fast-Track Indicators for Turning the 1325 Promise into Reality](#) actually came out on the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. I was invited by United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington D.C. to give a keynote speech and I wanted to offer something concrete, not simply words. To provide some background on the 10th anniversary - the UN Secretary General presented a report outlining a number of recommendations including collecting data, statistics, and undertaking studies. I felt it was not the best way to evaluate a milestone as fresh as 10-years old and wanted to align the effort with the energy of civil society and UN Member States. Therefore, I created my own doable, fast-track indicators launched at the USIP meeting. Since then, many NGOs have posted the information and indicators on their websites and the trend continues.

There are four focus areas of this proposal. The most important among those is the role of the UN Secretary-General. UNSCR 1325 must receive the special attention of the Secretary-General, demonstrably more so than for other resolutions. **Secretary-General António Guterres** has voiced his championship of 1325, women's equality and women's participation. He should be commended for having equal percentage of men and women in his senior management team but this effort must be replicated across the UN system. This global organization has been championing the cause of women's equality. Indeed, in 1945, the UN Charter was the first international instrument to recognize equality between women and men. That said, it's now the 75th anniversary of the UN and we don't have 50:50 gender parity across the entire work force. More important than the numbers perhaps, is the internalization of the spirit of 1325, and the spirit of women's equality. This is not about paying lip service; I believe the Secretary-General needs to play a greater role. Since 2010 I have been requesting him to issue a letter at the country-level through UN Resident Coordinators, tasking them to pursue the 1325 National Action Plan as a major focus of the Secretary-General's role. One letter would be sufficient. Consider my country Bangladesh which brought out its WPS National Action Plan (NAP) about two years ago. It had initiated the move for Resolution 1325 in the Security Council but then it fell through the cracks. If a letter from the Secretary-General was issued to Member States and addressed to the head of state, or head of government it would be impactful and elicit a response. But it hasn't happened. You could say the same about Pakistan and many other countries. Pre-Covid-19, every year the Secretary-General met hundreds of heads of states and governments. They come during September every year. However, UNSCR 1325 implementation and preparation of National Action Plans have not appeared on the talking points of the Secretary-General at all. This shouldn't be difficult for him. The effort does not require money. It needs the political and moral authority of the UN which has the power to cut through bureaucracy and many other obstacles. The Secretary-General understands this but perhaps 1325 is not a priority yet.

Secondly, having highlighted the Secretary-General's role, I believe Member States have an important role. They are the implementers of National Action Plans. I believe, less than 50 percent of the member states have produced NAPs during the past 20 years. In 2017, I expressed the hope that by the 20th anniversary we should have at least 100 NAPs. But people laughed at that suggestion saying it was impossible. There is an undercurrent undermining the importance of NAPs because they often lack budgets, appear to lack focus and are therefore deemed half-cooked. While these points may be valid, Member States must nevertheless formulate policy. How many leaders have spoken about 1325 as a national priority? How many Cabinets

have tabled the implementation of 1325 as an agenda item? Nowhere. It is the ground reality and I speak also for my own country Bangladesh. In the developing world, Africa has done better in terms of NAPs. In South Asia, in our part of the world, Nepal was the first, and after a long time Bangladesh joined in. Many countries, including countries from our region believe they are not obligated to make NAPs because there is no conflict in their country. However, I believe that if women's rights are under threat, if women's equality is not recognized, no country can claim it is not in conflict. It is, in fact, in conflict with itself. It does not need a border clash to show evidence of conflict. A number of countries including Israel have decided not to prepare a NAP as told to me by NGO workers who created the 1325 lapel pin. My advice to them is not to wait for government's decision. Civil society groups should create a "People's Action Plan," and implement it through their own work. Other countries will follow. Then when the tide will rise, governments will also follow. Some of my colleagues in the countries I mentioned have started doing that.

The third area of focus in my doable, fast-track indicators, after the role of the UN Secretary-General and Member States, is the senior management of the UN. This recommendation was offered at the 10th anniversary of 1325 when UN Women had not yet been established as an entity. Nonetheless, this issue is equally relevant to the Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping, and the Secretary-General's Executive Office. It must be understood and prioritized by their leadership. It is fortunate that Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo of the United States is now heading the Political Affairs department of the UN. She is a champion of 1325 and women's equality. I am very pleased with her focus. The Department of Political and Peace-building Affairs (DPPA) is also creating a 1325 history project which is very encouraging. While the leadership of UN senior management have attained gender parity, they should understand what 1325 means, the essence of that resolution, what needs to be done and how each department could make it integral to their work.

My fourth recommendation is the role of civil society. Among all four elements of my proposal, civil society has done better as they have been championing the cause of 1325. They have been talking about financing of 1325 implementation and about the localization of 1325. I am told that in Latin America and in some parts of Asia, this localization process is going very well, especially where the governments are not forthcoming and have not created a NAP. This is where the civil society has filled in the gap at the community level by bringing the energy of 1325 to life. It is being implemented although not at the national level. I am very pleased with the work of an international NGO known as the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP). They have done wonderful work by supporting countries in preparing their NAPs with technical and intellectual assistance. Their work has been impactful. Many countries are now in the process of preparing their NAPs. The UN should also come forward and provide technical assistance to prepare NAPs by Member States. It doesn't require many resources. A consultant may be appointed to help them figure it out – that is how Bangladesh was helped. Many other countries will also welcome such help and benefit from it.

So, all four pillars of my doable, fast-track indicators proposed ten years ago are still relevant and important. We need to highlight them. There are many rituals surrounding UNSCR 1325, the anniversaries, the annual meetings, big speeches, and big promises. But nothing substantive is happening. We have really

missed the historic and operational value of 1325. It was an international milestone but the implementation rate has not been encouraging at all.

SY: Thank you for your very insightful and candid responses. You mentioned earlier that African countries are perhaps doing better in implementing the 1325 agenda. What could the world learn from Africa?

AKC: I would like to pay tribute to African women. They have been at the forefront of their own national agenda and want to leave their mark. Their attitude is, "whatever is happening in my country should involve me as a woman. I cannot allow you men to keep on deciding for us." I saw it firsthand in West Africa when the war was still going on. As men were fighting, women were making sure that society moves on. They were sending their children to school, taking care of their elderly and putting food on the table. They were ensuring that the institutions function as well as possible. When the war ended and the men returned, they were really surprised to see that women had done so well in maintaining some semblance of normalcy. But they did not want women to participate in the new constitutional, legislative, governmental institutional mechanisms. The women were marginalized yet again. Even the inclusion of at least 30 percent women in Parliament, provided for in the UN guideline, became a challenge in Liberia. I personally believe it should be 50:50 gender parity in all cases, in all institutions. Some women activists from Liberia approached me to discuss their concern. At the time, I was Under-Secretary-General for a different mandate, however, they knew about my continuing advocacy of WPS. They complained that the UN Secretary-General's representative in Liberia had refused to incorporate the 30 per cent clause in the new constitution. We should continue to ensure that the UN plays a supportive role at the national level. The NAPs provide an opportunity to do so. It is a nationally agreed plan, prepared by nations themselves. However, it can be monitored globally. The Member States may not argue that a global institution is interfering in their national interest or affairs as it comes out of a resolution of the world body. Secondly, NAPs are accessible to everybody including civil society. The progress in implementation may be tracked on a website, nationally or globally, to identify countries where it is not being implemented. Governments could be held accountable for commitments made in their respective NAPs. It is a powerful tool for implementation of 1325.

SY: Sometimes one hears that the WPS agenda challenges cultural norms and traditions. Do you agree with this concern, and if so, what are some of your recommendations to overcome cultural barriers?

AKC: It is mostly men I find, in discussions on UN resolutions, who bring up the context of "culture". It is not about culture or tradition, it is about men and their love for power. It is a ploy. Nothing which is an affront to humanity can be one's culture! Nothing! No tradition should be supported if it goes against basic fundamental human rights. You cannot do that. When people talk about culture and tradition, I tell them it is about power. It is your eagerness to hang on to the power that you have enjoyed over the years, over the decades, and maybe centuries in the name of culture and tradition. These traditions and cultures have been enforced by men. Women had no role in creating that culture. Men tell them, "This is your culture, cover your head. Don't go out, this is your culture." Why? Who are you to tell me? I am as good a human being as you are. Why do you have to tell me and set my limitations in the name of culture? So, I don't agree with that. What culture does not regard women as equal? What culture tells me so? I have not seen any country making the case against women's equality, not in this day and age. It happened perhaps in much earlier

times and women also accepted it because they didn't have power. Power is a very important element here. Women's equality or lack of it is generated by power play. Equality and human rights have always been subject of debate and are sometimes seen as a violation of "cultural norms." What does not serve humanity's norms cannot be justified in the name of culture, tradition and religion.

Women's participation is very important, and one aspect of participation is political leadership. We must ensure women's equality, not by way of tokenism, but as a reality. Many countries add women in their delegations just to take credit. Even in peace negotiations, I find some delegations have a woman or two, but they don't speak up and are not allowed to. The men leading the team say, "I speak for all of you." Women's political leadership is very important. It would create a ripple effect across society. It will touch every corner, no matter how low or how high. So, we have to start there. Remember the famous quotation by Eleanor Roosevelt, "Too often the great decisions are originated and given form in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression." Women have limited roles and decisions are presented as if they were on behalf of humanity, on behalf of everybody. But these decisions were created by men.

It is therefore very important for us to ensure women's political leadership and give them opportunities. Institutions such as the judiciary should have more women reflecting their perspectives in decision-making. In many parts of the world, we have Supreme Courts with a biased composition of men. It is very important that the judiciary, at all levels, not only in a Supreme Court, but also at the level of judges should include women. This also applies to law enforcement authorities including police and peacekeepers. Peacekeeping missions are more effective when women are included. To speak very frankly, sexual exploitation and abuse caused by peacekeepers in various parts of the world continues unabated. While the UN has a "zero tolerance" sexual harassment policy, the problem continues. Zero tolerance has received zero attention. The mechanisms to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers are absolutely meaningless in my opinion. They continue to engage with vulnerable communities. Therefore, I believe that more women in peacekeeping forces will help fifty percent of that country's population in meaningful ways. I am not making a general statement - there are, indeed, many good people, good men supporting UN's peacekeeping. But I think in all cases of sexual abuse, exploitation, and inequality, women feel more comfortable bringing it to the attention of a woman peacekeeper. They are able to freely talk about their experience. The men generally are dismissive and do not want to engage with these women.

I also want to emphatically make the point that we do not want women's equality in military. Militarism and militarization are not in the best interest of humanity. We don't want 1325 to mean that we are making war safe for women. We want to structure peace in a way that there is no need for war and conflict, so that war is abolished forever. My friend Cora Weiss continues to talk about "WWW" in reference to a "World Without War". This is what we want 1325 to promote, women's equality and women's participation to ensure that the world has less conflict, not more individuals in the military.

SY: In aspiring for a "World Without War" please tell us how to enable both women and men to share equal responsibility for building peace and security. How could security practitioners in the Indo-Pacific region come closer to a world envisioned by UNSCR 1325?

AKC: Recalling the point made about Women, Peace, and Security in the beginning and the use of specific language, I would first like to suggest that you should call these actors "peace and security practitioners" not just "security practitioners." When we speak of security practitioners, generally, we are limiting ourselves to police force, military, or intelligence people. However, security becomes worthwhile, worth its name, when we explain it in the context of human security. After all, security is not for the state but for the people living in that state. The traditional concept of state security is absolutely wrongly directed. Our focus should be on human security where all activities of the government, those of families and our communities are focused on how individuals are being taken care of. If we take humans out of security, then security becomes faceless, security becomes an apparatus where anything could be done. Security becomes like James Bond 007 with the license to kill. That is not what we want. We have to understand that security is for human beings. Poverty is a threat to security as is women's inequality. Covid-19 has now become a threat to health and is a risk to security. These are important security concerns and should be addressed in the Security Council. Our perception of security needs to change. Unfortunately, or coincidentally, 1325 is a product of the Security Council which is dominated by inter-state perceptions of security. I have been trying to bring this perspective into the Security Council's work relating to 1325 in particular. It's a daunting

challenge and should be taken up by younger people. It is also problematic due to the structure of the Security Council whose affairs are controlled by the five permanent members who have their own views. Human security does not appear in their nomenclature although the UN has adopted a number of resolutions on human security. I believe that the human security aspect is very important because it enables us to highlight women's equality agenda more effectively.

My advice for peace and security practitioners in all global regions, including in the Indo-Pacific, is to start preparing their NAPs as soon as possible, especially those who haven't started yet. I recommend creating a list of foot-draggers on the occasion of the 20th anniversary and posting the information online. These countries should see the list especially as many of them were members of the Security Council when UNSCR 1325 was passed, and in subsequent years when nine other supporting resolutions were adopted. It is my request to your Center and to anybody who cares to listen to promote preparation of the NAPs. It is the only way you can show to the world that a country is engaged at the highest political level. Some countries have presented their plans to their Parliaments to demonstrate their commitment. A NAP on Women, Peace and Security is instrumental in advancing a women's equality and participation agenda more efficiently than all other national instruments. Everything (every issue of relevance to women's equality) is compiled in a single document and it allows for monitoring. It really doesn't matter if the NAP is not well-written or half-cooked. It offers a point of departure.

I have also suggested in my doable, fast-track indicators that the NAP should by design be updated every two years. Sometimes, however, updating has its inherent dangers where the change of government is against the equality agenda. Challenges to women's equality and women's rights and participation continue to mutate. Today's challenges may reappear as different challenges two years later. In recent years, 1325 and the Beijing Platform have faced a backlash and there is an agenda for rolling back the

advances in many countries of the world. There are many governments who have been elected for their conservative policies and with such institutional changes, 1325 faces more challenges. I sometimes wonder why women's agenda is perceived as problematic by policymakers with many women in leadership positions. On the other hand, women leaders do not automatically become champions of women's equality. The problem must also be understood in that context. The challenges are endless. Therefore, I do not sit back and relax although we are observing the 20th anniversary of this resolution.

To conclude our conversation, I believe that it is very important for us to recognize the value of feminism. Feminism is a smart policy; it's good for everybody. Women's issues are not women's issues alone. These are issues for the whole world, for humanity as a whole. What is good for women is good for everybody. Feminism is inclusive. Feminism is participatory. Feminism leaves no one behind. It is very important. I am proud to be a feminist and all of us need to be. That is how we can ensure that the world is a better place for all of us; I speak these words from my heart. When we talk about peace and development, here are my thoughts: peace is not possible without development, and development is not achievable without peace. But neither peace nor development is conceivable without full participation of women. This is a reality and it would serve us better to understand and accept it much more quickly than we are at the moment. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Nobel Peace Laureate and former President of Liberia, spoke about the proverbial glass ceiling at an event a few years ago. She said that some of us have broken the glass ceiling, but, maybe for the world as a whole, for the rest of the countries, it will take nearly 80 years to achieve women's equality.

Equality of women's pay is another key economic indicator. Women's pay is 30 percent lower than men as a global average. Oxfam came out with the projection that it will take 170 years for women globally to have equality of pay. It is another challenge for the world. We have to change this and we will never give up. It is very important and to those who are listening to me, please wake up and work for the equality and rights of women and their full participation at all decision-making levels.

This is what I hope for through my humble contribution to humanity and I want this mission to be picked up by everybody else for the future. Be proud to be a feminist. I think it's true for men and women both – don't feel embarrassed. It is not only for women to say that "I am a feminist." We can all be feminists. It is my respect for the smart policy that feminism professes. It is an important one. Recently, at the UN, after many years for the first time the phrase "I am a feminist" was uttered by Secretary-General **António Guterres** - a plus for him. He used a phrase that I have been using for 10 years, "I am proud to be a feminist." I am very happy about it and believe that it should be signed on to by everyone joining the UN. They should say that this is part of my job description and I need to be, in the true sense, a feminist.

Thank you very much! With solidarity, with feminist solidarity!!!

*The views expressed in this article are the author's alone, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the DKI APCSS or the United States Government.
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