

Forum: Disarmament Commission (DC)

Issue: The Question of Women, Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Control

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Introduction

The role of women in disarmament is a key element towards obtaining international peace and security. Men and women suffer different impacts from the proliferation of weapons such as social and political inequalities and pressure from increase in female-headed households as well as a high risk of sexual and gender based violence. Women are underrepresented in terms of disarmament and arms control discussion this is mostly likely due to the fact that women are regarded as vulnerable victims and are usually grouped as a minority along with children and the elderly. This stereotypical view, which regards women to be a “weaker sex” that is in need of a “powerful” man, has continued to exclude women from respected social and political roles. The inclusion of women in disarmament will play a vital role in solving and preventing conflicts as well as maintaining a diverse international security.

The Security Council Resolution 1325 has stated since 2000, that in order to maintain international peace and security it is vital that both men and women have equal and effective participation in Disarmament negotiations and discussions. Disarmament and non-proliferation is crucial and absolutely essential in maintaining international peace and security. The role of women in disarmament will not only have an equal voice in disarmament but also prevent “violent masculinities” where men are prepared to use military action and to exert weapons. Furthermore, disarmament is not only relied on the eradication of weapons but it also relies on tackling the mobilization of people and their societies. The issue of disarmament and non-proliferation needs to be addressed from all aspects including women. Moreover, if women’s experiences of war and themselves are not included in considering peace building and conflict resolution, in the long term it could be seen as gender- based violence and violations of women’s rights.

As women are usually underrepresented in fields such as politics, diplomacy, military affairs and technology they do not have the knowledge or are given the opportunity to express their experiences of war. They are not given their rightful voice in proclaiming their thoughts and experiences on disarmament and non-proliferation. At times, the contributions given by women are thought to be

“feminine” and are disregarded. However, in this case women are denied their rights and therefore denied their voice to be heard in terms of international security and peace.

Definition of Key Terms

Non-proliferation

Non-proliferation is the prevention of the increasing number of countries that possess nuclear weaponry in order to maintain international security and peace. The Treaty of non-proliferation which is an international treaty that aims to prevent the spread and use of nuclear weaponry was established in 1968 to maintain international peace and security.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence is a discriminatory or violent act that targets a certain gender whilst violating human rights. Women have been a victim of gender based violence such that women are thought to be the “weaker sex” and their views towards disarmament are deflected and their human rights violated.

Disarmament

Disarmament is the reduction of military forces and weapons in order to maintain international peace. Women’s role in disarmament is extremely essential to maintain international security and peace such that their experiences will be able to help in the resolving the question of disarmament as well as peace building.

Security Council Resolution 1325

Security Council Resolution 1325 is a resolution adopted by the United Nations on women and peace. It emphasizes and proclaims the importance of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as maintaining international peace and security. Currently, it is the resolution used as the base in the promoting the inclusion of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Background Information

Disarmament and non-proliferation has been a continued effort over the past decade. Prior to the First World War, The Hague peace conference that was held in 1889 and 1907 decided to establish an

international court with binding powers. During this period, it was believed that the competing buildup of armaments by powerful countries was a factor that led to war. Furthermore, the newly established League of Nations (1920) had ensured that its members reduced their arms to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations this helped to maintain international peace and security. In addition, over the next several years the issue of disarmament was still yet to be solved despite many attempts such as the temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments (1921), which explored a range of possibilities for disarmament such as the abolishment of chemical warfare and strategic bombing, however this was vetoed by the United Kingdom.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was unanimously passed in October 2000 after the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and United Nations Development Fund for Women UNIFEM (now more commonly referred to as UN women) held an open session on women, peace and security and provided key and vital information in bringing the council's attention to the significance of Women's contribution to international peace and security. In addition, the Beijing Platform of Action of 1995 had an entire chapter that was focused on Women, peace and security. This promoted the importance of women in disarmament as well as the negative experiences women faced post-conflict and the significant barriers they faced when they entered peace talks. The Nations Security Council Resolution has promoted the significance of Women to be a part of peace keeping and has also highlighted sexual violation.

As of recent events

The issue of women being included in peace talks and decisions concerning non-proliferation and disarmament is still a pressing issue. According to Peace Women (an international Women's league that advocates for freedom and peace), women are still underrepresented in the UN where only 16 out of 197 were statements delivered by women's representatives and 86 out of 197 statements did not reference to women at all in 2016. The inclusion of Women in matter of disarmament is still an ongoing struggle as women are still underrepresented as shown by the statistics above. In 2015, the Women, Peace and security act was introduced in order to help end active conflicts between countries. Moreover, this would allow women to be involved in the matters of disarmament and would help highlight the importance of women and the qualities that women bring to the table such that they are able to connect political, economic, social and cultural divides together in order to promote and maintain international peace and security.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America (USA)

The United Nations of America supports the inclusion of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as the promotion of women's leadership and the awareness of gender-based violence. Moreover, the disarmament ambassador has said that the United States of America acknowledges the importance of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace building in order to obtain international peace and security. In addition, the USA is committed to having equal participation and representation of both men and women in peace conferences in order that every voice is heard.

The USA has established the Department Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment that promotes women's equal access to resources, services and decent work as well as addressing pressing issues that stop women's economic participation such as gender-based violence and crimes. This provides women the education and awareness of their rights to be included in peace talks and disarmament and non-proliferation conferences.

In 2011, the USA established the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) which aimed to ensure that women were included and participated equally in the prevention of conflict and building peace. The NAP was committed to promote the significance of women in conflict prevention. In 2012, USA released the Implementation Plan of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This further promoted gender equality and the importance of women in disarmament and non-proliferation as well as maintaining international peace and security.

Peace Women (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom)

The Women, Peace and Security Programme (peace women) is a programme established by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) that was established in 1915. Peace women aim to include women in the participation of the disarmament and non-proliferation conferences as well as women to be a part of conflict prevention and resolution. In order to promote gender inclusive participation, peace women encourage stakeholders through their global events, to ensure that women are included and are able to participate in peace conferences. Furthermore, in order to promote conflict prevention, peace women offers an integrated approach where they aim to challenge militarism, arms trade and strengthen women's rights by providing appropriate detail and expert support to governing bodies. Consequently, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom help women to be included in peace conferences and stress the importance of women in the matter of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to maintain international peace and security.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The United Nations Office for Disarmament affairs (UNODA) is a United Nations based organization, which was established in 1998 as the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The UNODA began with guidelines in 2001 to begin mainstreaming gender perspectives into work as well as its advancement for women which was titled "Gender Perspectives on Disarmament" and in 2010,

“Mainstreaming gender for effective implementation of the UN PoA” which stresses the importance of women in disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, in 2016 the UNODA launched the “Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan” that promoted the significance of a women’s role in international peace and security, especially in the political decisions, as well as the terms that have been embedded in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Moreover, the UNODA expresses how women participation and empowerment is crucial in maintaining international peace and security as well as implementation of equal and full participation of both men and women in disarmament and non-proliferation processes and conferences. The inclusion of women is crucial as their experiences and opinions on disarmament and non-proliferation is it not only securing their human rights and social justice but also allows women to be a part of peace building which will help in the development of the country and the women themselves.

Rwanda

Rwanda released a National Action Plan that developed from 2009-2012, it was led by the Ministry of Gender and Family promotion in order that women’s role in disarmament and conflict solving be highlighted. The NAP included baseline studies and participatory workshops, which helped to promote mainstream gender and the significance of Women’s role in politics, disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, the NAP highlights six key strategies where one of them is the further enforcement of the Security Council Resolution 1325. The NAP was developed after the 1994 genocide, which killed around 1 million of the Tutsi Minority group in Rwanda. In order that Rwanda does not experience another tragedy much like the 1994 genocide it has started to be involved in disarmament and have addressed the importance of women in peace building and disarmament in order to maintain international peace and security. In addition, Rwanda held an election in 2003 to mark the end of the horrors of 1994 genocide, women have gained around 50% of seat in parliament and government positions which shows that Rwanda is developing and their strive of mainstreaming gender and maintaining international peace and security as well as the importance of women is clearly developing and advancing.

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)

UNIFEM is an international UN organization that provides financial and technical support to programmes and strategies that help promote women’s rights and their involvement in politics, economic security and peace building. UNIFEM was created in 1976 in order that women’s rights are enforced and their involvement in politics and economic issues are assured. UNIFEM’s is mainly focused on the different impacts arms has had on women and how women should be included in decisions on disarmament and non-proliferation discussions. UNIFEM hopes to engage women from targeted communities that have faced the use of arms be involved in the matters of disarmament and non-proliferation. On a global scale, UNIFEM supports and advocates the Security Council Resolution 1325 in all aspects that women are essential in maintaining international peace and security. UNIFEM still

strives and continues to support and help include women and their perspectives in politics and disarmament and non-proliferation.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (5th December 2016) A/RES/71/56
- Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (2nd December 2014) A/RES/69/61
- Women, Peace and Security(30th October 2000) S/RES/1325
- Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (5th December 2013) A/RES/68/33

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) launched the Women's Scholarship for Peace (WSP) to help facilitate women from the global south to take training courses about peace, development and international security. These women are educated on the issues related to disarmament and therefore would gain a diverse knowledge of the issue such as disarmament and development, international peace, non-proliferation and conventional weapons. This has allowed women to be able to contribute their experiences and have a voice in peace building as well as this has allowed them to be able to recognize their rights and be assured social justice. In addition, their knowledge and experience have allowed them to better understanding of the issue and be capable of potentially helping to solve it. However, a total of around 140 scholarships are given out that cover full costs, this only accounts for a small percentage of women who rights are violated and are not able to participate in disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, those women who do not get the scholarship have no access to the same information and the same benefits nor are they financially capable of getting an education for this matter and therefore this has become a problem today that although the program is extremely beneficial and provides diverse information, it is limited in terms of how many women can acquire it.

The United Nations in 2000 had released the Security Council resolution 1325 in order that the council's attention is brought to the significance of Women's contribution to international peace and security. In addition, in 2010, the UN released a comprehensive 7- Point Action Plan that covered Women's full engagement as well as the United Nations allocating 15% of post conflict funds to be used for women specific needs and advancing gender equality. Despite, such attempts that were made by the UN, the role of women in peace building, disarmament and non-proliferation has been marginal. Although the UN Women has provided services for women and helped to enforce gender equality in disarmament and non-proliferation, according to the Executive director of UN Women said that women only comprised of 13% of all the UN Staff and that in peace and security conference not all women were

present. Furthermore, in LEDCs women still face a gender barrier and are politically excluded from concerns such as disarmament and non-proliferation this aggravated further due to conflict. Although, Women have gained a voice in the countries decision on disarmament and non-proliferation they still faced gender barriers and this has caused them to be excluded and for their rights to be violated. Women still remain underrepresented in public office, the needs of women in disarmament is overlooked and potentially ignored ad the amount of women that are involved or participating in peace settlements still remain subsidiary.

Possible Solutions

In order to tackle the first problem where the peace scholarships are only given to a small amount of women, workshops could be set up in LEDC along with the help of the United Nations Office for Disarmament and the UN women to help educate women on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation as well as their own rights so that they are able to raise their voices and contribute to peace settlements. In addition, the workshops should be free from gender bias perhaps by having a representative from the UN Women to make sure that women do not face a gender barrier or any forms of gender based violence and are allowed to enter and voice their opinions and needs. This will help women gain an understanding of the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation as well as allow the women to voice their opinions and resolutions without being victims of gender based violence.

The promotion through social media and local media (newspaper, magazines) would advertise why women are essential and crucial for international peace and security; this would improve their significance in disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, the promotion of women rights and gender-based violence that women face should be expressed through local and social media as this will help other organizations and countries understand the importance of women in international security. Furthermore, the promotion of the importance of women in disarmament through social media will help organizations and programs incorporate women in their events and give them jobs within the organization so that they are actively participating in conferences on disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, perhaps incorporation/ allowing more women to run for positions in politics and key positions in the government will allow women to be an active part of the countries decision on disarmament as well as the ability to take some of these decisions, where the decisions will be made with consideration of the women's experiences, needs and opinions.

The UN should include more positions for women in their facilities and programmes so that women have an active voice in the UN and are able to continuously be a part of disarmament and non-proliferation. This will ensure that women are a part of disarmament and non-proliferation and that they are free from gender-based violence. In addition, the UN could further enforce or promote the Security Council Resolution 1325 in LEDCs so that the terms of resolution is continuously enforced and the UN

can allocate UN representatives that visit LEDCs and relevant organizations to monitor that women are allowed to be a part of the resolutions and prevention of conflict and on the decisions made on disarmament and non-proliferation. It is important that the Security Council Resolution 1325 is enforced in LEDC's as these countries often disregard women which often lead to women being left out in peace conferences. In addition, LEDC's still lack development as well as they could be subject to corruption and violations of human rights that has become barriers for the women in LEDC's as they do not have the freedom and potentially power to share their voice in disarmament and non- proliferation. In addition, the UN representative should make sure that the organizations or governments are abiding to the terms of the Security Council Resolution 1325.

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