

Sixth Meeting

7th December 2016, Iveagh House, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Minutes: Thematic Meeting

Presentation by Midterm Review Consultants, Bronagh Hinds and Debbie Donnelly

The consultants hired to conduct the independent Midterm Review of the second National Action Plan on WPS gave a broad overview of their approach to the Review and the framework for completion. The work will be done in four main stages: desk research; interviews and consultations; analysis; and reporting and recommendations. They will produce a main report detailing progress on implementation of the NAP, and a second report on the utility of the indicators currently in use under the NAP and offering guidance for the development of indicators for potential future iterations of the NAP. The consultants are currently in the process of conducting interviews with stakeholders which will continue throughout December and into early January. A number of areas of special focus for the interviews were highlighted including: the extent to which the commitments in the NAP are felt to strategically contribute to the WPS goals; the level of communication and collaboration within and between statutory bodies on implementation; and the usefulness or otherwise of the indicators in reflecting outcomes or impact of the NAP. The consultants highlighted a number of early observations arising from their desk-based work and interviews.

Discussion

It was agreed that a separate consultation with the Oversight Group on the question of the indicators would be necessary in order to fulfil the Terms of Reference. In reviewing the timeline for work it was noted that it would be desirable to complete the main report on implementation prior to Ireland's periodic review before the CEDAW committee on the 13th February. It was agreed to extend the deadline for completion of the separate report on indicators to March, to facilitate discussion of the indicators at the Q1 Oversight Group meeting in early February.

Oversight Group members suggested that there would be value in assessing the impact of the evolution in the approach to indicators over the life-cycle of NAPs 1 and 2, with a more pragmatic approach being adopted for the 2nd NAP. There was a general consensus that action-oriented indicators may not be providing sufficient information on the outcomes and impacts of actions carried out under the NAP.

Discussion on Domestic Promotion of the WPS Agenda (Jacqueline Healy, National Women's Council of Ireland)

Ms Healy opened the discussion by highlighting an information session on 1325 Women, Peace and Security in July 2016 hosted by the NWCI at which a number of priorities for promotion of the NAP emerged. These included: the need to reach out to and include diverse groups of women including migrant women; to encourage the mainstreaming of WPS principles into all new and existing policy agendas; to re-emphasise the North-South dimension of the Plan; and to adopt a more regional

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approach to promotion of the NAP as existing activities are overly Dublin-centric. She noted a number of means by which promotion is occurring at present and which could be more effectively utilised: through holding focus groups on WPS; raising the WPS agenda on social media platforms; organising biannual conferences of the NCWI; and appearing before Oireachtas Committees. There is a need to make the NAP more digestible in order to engage a wider public audience, perhaps through presenting relevant sections separately to particular stakeholder groups.

A number of promotion opportunities in 2017 were identified. The gender equality commitment in the 2017 programme for government is a vital tool for promotion of broader WPS principles. The review of Ireland's implementation of CEDAW on 13th February provides the possibility for a press release and wider media engagement. For immediate action, the opportunity to contribute to consultations on the National Women's Strategy, the National Action Plan on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the National Intercultural Health Strategy were emphasised, and it was agreed that the Secretariat would make submissions to the lead Departments to highlight the relevancy of the WPS agenda. Nicola Donnelly noted that D/IE are very conscious of the relevance of WPS principles to the National Action Plan on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Ms Healy suggested that promotion of the agenda in Northern Ireland among Women's and Youth Organisations should receive renewed focus. Members of the Oversight Group raised concerns over the fact that there is no reference to NI in the UK NAP on Women, Peace and Security. Some discussion of the positive work taking place within Northern Ireland itself on the WPS agenda was highlighted (particularly the development of a Strategic Guide and Toolkit on Applying WPS Practice in 2014) as well as the opportunities provided by the 1325 Ad hoc Committee within the Assembly and the NI European Women's Platform. It was suggested that momentum could be generated by having the NAP added to the agendas of the North-South Ministerial Council and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

The sheer breadth of the WPS agenda can be problematic in terms of discerning a 'trickle down' effect from INGOs to grass roots organisations. It was thought that work was needed to identify activities pursuant to the WPS agenda which are otherwise labelled as gender equality, GBV or governance related. In this way the WPS agenda can be made more relatable to the wider public and move away from its association with high-level peacekeeping.

Presentation by CRU (Paula Molloy and Olivia Lucas) and Ireland's PMUN in New York (Cianna O'Connell) on Promotion of the WPS agenda regionally and internationally

CRU, with input from the PMUN in New York, gave a comprehensive overview of Ireland's approach to promotion at the regional and international levels. This began with a description of the primary regional and international organisations within which Ireland champions the WPS principles; namely, the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council. Six "tools" or strategies for promotion were highlighted: advocacy, convening power, networks, experience, funding programmes and communications. For each a number of practical examples were provided by CRU and PMUN to illustrate the "tools" at work.

Examples provided included CRU's presence at the EU Informal Taskforce on Resolution 1325 and facilitation of expert participation at WPS-related events in Ireland and abroad. Ms Connell drew attention to Ireland's role as co-facilitator of negotiations around the Sustainable Development Goals and New York Declaration as well as the co-sponsorship of a number UN Security Council resolutions on peacekeeping, and participation in thematic Open Debates at the Security Council.

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The extent of Ireland's funding of WPS programmes internationally was also emphasised, primarily Ireland's support of the Global Acceleration Instrument and the work by women mediators in Burundi that this has enabled. Examples were provided of the way in which DFAT endeavours to initiate a process and follow through on all of its promotional activities, rather than engaging in one-off stand-alone activities.

Discussion

The Secretariat agreed to circulate a calendar of upcoming regional and international events, to allow Oversight Group members the opportunity to provide input in advance of the events.

There was a consensus that Oversight Group members could use International Women's Day as a platform for promoting the NAP and WPS agenda. A positive tone should be set for the day, perhaps based around the theme of women leaders.

There was interest in exploring the promotion of the WPS agenda through non-traditional platforms such as the UN Economic and Social Council. Ms O'Connell informed the Oversight Group that the first ever Arria formula meeting between the UN Security Council and the CEDAW Committee took place on 5th December, signalling better coordination between UN institutions on WPS.

It was suggested that the Emergency Response Fund scheme administered by the DFAT could be used to support WPS work in addition to its focus on humanitarian sudden-onset response. Other points of note include the good work being carried out by colleagues in the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Unit in terms of promotion of WPS principles.

Date and Theme of Q1 2017 Meeting

The next meeting should be held on either the 7th or 9th of February, to be confirmed.

The Q1 meeting will address the findings of the Midterm Review and discuss assessment of the indicators. The findings of the Review will inform the choice of themes for subsequent meetings.

Action Points

- Secretariat to make submissions to the National Women's Strategy, the National Action Plan on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the National Intercultural Health Strategy highlighting the links with the WPS agenda
- Secretariat to circulate a calendar of upcoming regional and international events

*Secretariat to the Oversight Group to the 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
13th December 2016*