

Joint Nordic statement at UNSC open debate on Women, Peace and Security

Who HE Marie Bjerre, Minister for Digital Government and Gender Equality of Denmark

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President,

Members of the Security Council,

On behalf of the Nordic countries – Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Denmark – I want to thank Mozambique for convening this timely meeting on women, peace and security.

More than 20 years ago, women peace activists successfully advocated for the Security Council to recognise the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls and the crucial role of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Women are still at the forefront of conflict and crises. In Ukraine, following the Russian full-scale invasion and war of aggression, women are among the first-responders, frontline defenders, and at the heart of the humanitarian response. It illustrates every day why this Council has repeatedly called for women's participation in **all** aspects of peace and security.

Unfortunately, women's participation in efforts to uphold peace and security – in Ukraine and elsewhere - are carried out under a constant and unacceptable threat of conflict-related sexual violence.

We call on all parties to armed conflicts to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. Prevention of - and accountability for - conflict-related sexual violence must be ensured. Everywhere and always.

Towards the 25th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the Nordics emphasize the importance of meaningful implementation and advancement of the women peace, and security agenda. The Security Council must ensure that UN peace operations have a comprehensive “women, peace and security”-mandate. But our commitment to achieve the women, peace and security agenda goes beyond the work of the Security Council.

In this regard we would like to highlight two areas of crucial importance for the agenda’s implementation:

First, we must ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making and peacebuilding processes, including to secure the full enjoyment of human rights for women and girls, in all their diversity. Participation and leadership of local women-led and women’s rights organizations is especially important. Women-led organizations should have access to flexible financing – for capacity building, participation and protection against reprisals.

Second, we must stop intimidation, attacks and reprisals against all women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society leaders. We must defend the “defenders”: In 2021, 35 women human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists were killed as a retaliation for their work. These are the women we know of. But we know, this is heavily underreported. And many more are threatened and harassed into silence - online as well as offline. This Council, and the UN peace and security architecture as a whole, needs to be informed by a diverse group of

briefers. And to ensure that we protect their participation, we, the member states, must also ensure a zero tolerance for reprisals.

Thank you.