



Women, Peace and Security Bill [HL]

HL Bill 22 of 2022–23

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The [Women, Peace and Security Bill \[HL\]](#) is a private member's bill introduced by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Conservative). The bill is due to have its second reading in the House of Lords on 9 September 2022.

The bill would require the secretary of state to have regard to the UK's national action plan on women, peace and security (NAP) when formulating and implementing policy. A NAP is an action plan that has been adopted to meet commitments under United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325. The resolution concerns the participation of women in peace and security efforts.

Since the adoption in 2000 of the resolution, the security council has encouraged member states to develop national action plans on women, peace and security.¹ To date, around 50 percent of UN member states have adopted such NAPs. The UK is currently on its fourth NAP, which was launched in 2018 and spans 2018 to 2022. The 2018–2022 UK NAP is based on the four pillars of the WPS agenda, which are:

- **Prevention:** Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- **Participation:** Women participate equally with men and gender equality is promoted in peace and security decision-making processes at national, local, regional and international levels.
- **Protection:** Women's and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations.
- **Relief and Recovery:** Women and girls' specific relief needs are met and women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The plan also identifies seven strategic outcomes, selected for their contributions to the four pillars of the women, peace and security agenda: peacekeeping; gender-based violence; decision-making; security and justice; humanitarian response; preventing and countering violent extremism; and UK capabilities. The UK's fourth NAP includes a commitment to annual reporting to Parliament.² On publication, the reports are deposited in the libraries of both Houses.³

¹ [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325](#).

² HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022](#)', January 2018, p 24.

³ House of Commons, '[Written statement: Women, peace and security national action plan 2018–2022: Annual report 2018](#)', 19 December 2018, HCWS1208.

The bill would require the government to report annually to Parliament on the progress made in relation to the NAP. In addition, the bill details considerations the secretary of state must have regard to, particularly where the UK is participating in a multi-national organisation, such as the United Nations.

Baroness Hodgson has previously spoken about the need for women’s participation in all peace and security efforts and women’s involvement should be a “core part of every FCDO [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office] policy”. For example, in a House of Lords debate in March 2022, she said:

Now more than ever it is vital to include women’s voices in peace processes. Evidence that gender equality is essential to building peace and security has grown substantially since UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. In fact, involving women increases the chances of longer-lasting, more sustainable peace, yet women continue to be excluded. You cannot build peace by leaving out half the population—look at Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. We should not have to justify why women should be included; we should ask the men with guns why they are there when they have caused all that misery. How do we ensure that women play a meaningful role and that their voices are heard? Will the minister agree that the women, peace and security agenda is now more important than ever and should be a core part of every FCDO policy?⁴

I. Background

I.1 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (WPS).⁵ The UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women argues that the resolution:

[...] reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for member states and the entities of the United Nations system.⁶

⁴ [HL Hansard, 17 March 2022, col 52GC.](#)

⁵ [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.](#)

⁶ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, ‘[Landmark resolution on women, peace and security](#)’, accessed 14 July 2022.

A number of related resolutions have been made on women, peace and security since the resolution in October 2000. These are listed in the bill.

1.2 National action plans

Under the terms of UNSC Resolution 1325, member states are encouraged to adopt national action plans (NAPs) to demonstrate how they will meet their commitments under the resolution.

At a meeting of the UNSC in October 2002, to celebrate the second anniversary of the UNSC's adoption of the resolution, the then president of the UNSC, Martin Belinga Eboutou, stated that the resolution:

[...] encourages member states, the entities of the United Nations system, civil society and other relevant actors, to develop clear strategies and action plans with goals and timetables, on the integration of gender perspectives in humanitarian operations, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, including monitoring mechanisms, and also to develop targeted activities, focused on the specific constraints facing women and girls in post-conflict situations, such as their lack of land and property rights and access to and control over economic resources.⁷

The development of NAPs was also included in later resolutions, such as UNSC Resolution 2493 in 2019.⁸ As defined by the UNSC, the purpose of resolution 2943 was to:

Strengthen the existing normative framework of Women, Peace, and Security by requesting the UN to develop context-specific approaches for women's participation in all UN-supported peace processes; and [urge] the Member States to ensure and provide timely support for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes.

As part of that process, the UNSC again called for the “development of action plans and other complementary implementation planning frameworks”. The resolution also encouraged member states to “continue to pursue such implementation, including through strengthened monitoring, evaluation and coordination”.⁹

As of August 2021, 98 countries and territories (50 percent of United Nations member states) had adopted dedicated NAPs on WPS, and 12 regional organisations had regional strategies or plans in place.¹⁰ 86 percent of NAPs had monitoring indicators to track progress.¹¹

⁷ United Nations Security Council, '[Statement by the president of the security council](#)', 31 October 2002.

⁸ United Nations Security Council, '[Resolution: Women, peace and security](#)', 29 October 2019, S/RES/2493.

⁹ United Nations Security Council, '[Resolution: Women, peace and security](#)', 29 October 2019, S/RES/2493.

¹⁰ UN Women, '[Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security](#)', accessed 14 July 2022.

¹¹ UN Women, '[Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security](#)', accessed 14 July 2022.

1.3 UK's national action plan

The most recent NAP in the UK was launched in 2018 and spans five years from 2018 to 2022.¹² It is the fourth UK NAP, with other plans produced in 2006, 2010 and 2014. The plan is jointly owned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Ministry of Defence (MoD).¹³ The government has described it as the UK's highest-level strategy on gender and conflict.¹⁴

The UK NAP is based on the four pillars of the WPS agenda, which are:

- **Prevention:** Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- **Participation:** Women participate equally with men and gender equality is promoted in peace and security decision-making processes at national, local, regional and international levels.
- **Protection:** Women's and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations.
- **Relief and Recovery:** Women and girls' specific relief needs are met and women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The 2018–2022 UK NAP identifies seven strategic outcomes, selected for their contributions to the four pillars of the women, peace and security agenda: peacekeeping; gender-based violence; decision-making; security and justice; humanitarian response; preventing and countering violent extremism; and UK capabilities.¹⁵

The government has stated that the outcomes are designed to be “specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and represent areas where we would expect to see progress over a five-year period”. While the NAP outlines the government's overall priorities for WPS and guiding principles for action, the government has noted that it does not set out a “prescriptive list of activities which should be undertaken in order to achieve these strategic outcomes” or capture all of the UK's contributions to the women, peace and security agenda.¹⁶

The plan relates to the UK's defence, development and diplomatic work in nine focus countries but applies globally.¹⁷ The government has said that the plan was developed in collaboration with civil society and academics including the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) network of UK-based NGOs and the LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security. In addition, it held in-country civil society consultations in Afghanistan, Burma, Somalia and Syria “to ensure the voices of women in fragile and conflict-affected states were included”.

¹² HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022](#)', January 2018.

¹³ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022: Annual report to Parliament 2020](#)', 20 April 2021, p 4.

¹⁴ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022](#)', January 2018, p 6.

¹⁵ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022](#)', January 2018, p 8.

¹⁶ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018–2022](#)', January 2018, p 8.

¹⁷ The nine countries are: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria.

In addition to the NAP, the UK has also implemented a preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative (PSVI) since 2012. The PSVI aims to raise awareness of the extent of sexual violence in armed conflict and is closely linked to the UK's women, peace and security agenda.¹⁸

In July 2022, the government published an annual report on the implementation of the UK NAP in 2021.¹⁹ The report highlighted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, arguing that it had amplified gender-based inequality and led to a spike in gender-based violence. It also raised new and emerging threats to the WPS agenda, including climate change, international serious and organised crime and gendered disinformation and outlined activities which the UK government had undertaken on WPS. The report detailed plans for the FCDO to publish a new 'Women and Girls Strategy' in 2022. In addition, it stated:

The UK will also develop its next WPS NAP in 2022; it is an opportunity to reflect on and respond to emerging challenges and the changing global context. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine reinforces the importance of the WPS agenda and the need to ensure women and girls in conflict remain at the heart of our foreign policy. Tackling GBV [gender-based violence] and the PSVI will continue to be a UK priority and, in 2022, the UK will launch new grants to pilot and evaluate pioneering new approaches to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and crisis over the next five years, building the global evidence base on "what works". The foreign secretary is launching a major global campaign to stop sexual violence against women and girls in conflict around the world in 2022, and the UK will host a global summit to unite the world around action to prevent sexual violence in conflict.²⁰

In response to a recent parliamentary question the government said that the new NAP was likely to be launched at the end of the year:

The UK has played a leading role in taking forward justice and security for women in peace reconciliation through our diplomatic, defence and development efforts, by formulating detailed National Action Plans (NAP) and through the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI). The UK's fifth Women, peace and security NAP is currently being developed and will launch in the end of 2022.²¹

1.4 Reaction to the UK government's approach

Responding to the government's 2020 annual report on the 2018–22 UK NAP, the civil society network Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) issued a shadow report in April 2021.²²

¹⁸ For more information, see: House of Commons Library, '[Conflict-related sexual violence and the UK's approach](#)' 22 June 2022.

¹⁹ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018-2022: Annual report to Parliament 2021](#)', July 2022.

²⁰ HM Government, '[UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018-2022: Annual report to Parliament 2021](#)', July 2022, p 8. More information on the campaign to tackle sexual violence in conflict around the world, launched on 16 November 2021, can be found at: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, '[Foreign secretary launches campaign to tackle sexual violence in conflict around the world](#)', 16 November 2021.

²¹ House of Commons, '[Written question: Conflict resolution](#)', 5 July 2022, 25804.

²² Gender Action for Peace and Security, '[Assessing UK government action on women, peace and security in 2020](#)', April 2021.

Although welcoming the collaborative approach of the UK government and its “dedication” to implementing the fourth NAP, it was critical of the evaluation of the action plan, stating:

Similar to the 2019 annual report, this year’s report remains an activity narrative. There is little information on the impact of the activities, or how different activities and programmes cumulatively advance the WPS agenda and the NAP strategic outcomes. As a result, it is difficult to track year-on-year progress at impact level. Most UK government funded programmes track impact. This information would benefit the annual report and allow for lessons learning for future years of NAP implementation and processes.²³

It was also critical of a lack of information about the financing for the WPS agenda in the UK NAP focus countries, stating “this makes assessing the UK’s commitment in financial terms almost impossible to assess”. GAPS has stated that it will launch its latest shadow report, on the 2021 annual report, in autumn 2022.²⁴

Concern has also been raised regarding the implementation of the PSVI.²⁵ The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), writing in 2020, gave the UK’s PSVI an ‘amber-red rating’, and criticised a lack of senior leadership and cuts in funding.²⁶

2. Bill provisions

Baroness Hodgson’s Women, Peace and Security Bill aims to tie UK policy more closely to the national action plan. To that end, the bill contains two clauses. Clause 1 of the bill defines the national action plan on women, peace and security, explaining that it relates to the plan adopted by the UK for meeting commitments under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and as it relates to subsequent UN resolutions.

Subsection 2 of clause 1 would require the secretary of state to report annually to Parliament about the progress made in relation to the NAP, which must refer to the PSVI.

Subsection 3 would require the secretary of state to have regard to the NAP and NAP annual report, when formulating or implementing policy in the UK in relation to foreign affairs, defence or related matters.

Subsection 4 of clause 1 would stipulate several considerations which the secretary of state must have particular regard to the need for:

- commitment to systematic gender consideration and responsiveness in all foreign policy, including diplomacy, development, security, humanitarian aid and international presence

²³ Gender Action for Peace and Security, [‘Assessing UK government action on women, peace and security in 2020’](#), April 2021, p 8.

²⁴ Gender Action for Peace and Security, [‘Official Twitter account’](#), 19 July 2022.

²⁵ For more information on the PSVI see: House of Commons Library, [‘Conflict-related sexual violence and the UK’s approach’](#) 22 June 2022.

²⁶ Independent Commission for Aid Impact, [‘New review: The UK’s preventing social violence in conflict initiative’](#), 9 January 2020.

- the inclusion of an appropriate number of women in the formulation and implementation of such policy so as to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment in decision-making
- commitment to gender equality and the guarantee of women's human rights, and to protecting the defenders of such rights
- justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including criminal accountability for perpetrators of such violence
- systematic recognition and participation of sufficient women in criminal accountability for perpetrators of such violence, delegations to support peace processes that are supported by the United Kingdom including processes led by the United Nations, including women from minority ethnic groups, women with disabilities and women who may be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- gender and inclusion mediation experts to be included in diplomatic missions relating to peace processes
- appropriate pre-deployment training for all staff on peace-keeping missions
- commitment to support local women's peacebuilding organisations through funding
- responding to the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in a survivor-centred manner

Subsection 5 of clause 1 would require the secretary of state to have regard to the areas specified in subsection 4 when the UK is participating in a multi-national organisation.

Clause 2 of the bill would provide that the measures would extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It would come into force on the day the legislation was passed.

3. Further reading

- UN Women, '[Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security](#)', accessed 14 July 2022
- Caitlin Hamilton et al, '[What we learnt from analysing twenty years of women, peace and security national action plans](#)', London School of Economics, 30 March 2020
- House of Commons Library, '[Conflict-related sexual violence and the UK's approach](#)', 22 June 2022
- House of Lords Library, '[International Women's Day 2022: Gender gaps across the world](#)', 4 March 2022
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, '[Implementing the women, peace and security agenda in the OSCE region](#)', 2000

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