



The Leader of the House of Lords

Baroness Coussins  
House of Lords  
London  
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16<sup>th</sup> March 2010

*Don Jean*

I am writing to thank you for your contribution to the Opposition Debate for International Women's Day in the House of Lords on 4th March 2010 and follow up on my commitment to respond to the points you raised regarding United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 about women and peacekeeping. I have shared the specific questions you raised in the debate with FCO and this letter draws on their advice.

The UK has been one of the principal supporters of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We play an active role at the United Nations, underpinned by advocacy and programmes in many of the world's trouble spots including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, to protect and promote a positive role for women.

I would like to highlight some of the actions the UK has taken. Our Mission to the United Nations in New York has a dedicated officer to cover Security Council business regarding protection issues, including on Women, Peace and Security. That officer and the UK's Permanent Representative in New York provide reporting and assessments on progress made and obstacles to UNSCR 1325 implementation. This has helped us to promote the inclusion of UNSCR 1325 across a spectrum of UN activity.

In the field of peacekeeping, we have consistently worked to include the provisions of UNSCR 1325 into the creation and renewal of UN peacekeeping mission mandates. This work has had an effect. The majority of UN peacekeeping missions now have within their mandate a role in assisting the host government to implement 1325. Missions also have either a dedicated Gender Advisor or a Gender Focal Point to ensure that UNSCR 1325 is mainstreamed throughout their operations.

We use our position on the Security Council to foster political will among member states and to seek consensus on ways to progress the agenda. This has included support to three recent Security Council resolutions: UNSCRs 1820, 1888 and 1889. Positive outcomes of these resolutions include:

- Calling upon the UN Secretary-General to develop a strategy to increase the number of women appointed into senior leadership positions.
- The establishment of a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallstrom, to spearhead UN system-wide efforts to prevent sexual violence, afford protection where necessary and to provide support for survivors. The UK will be supporting the work of her office.
- Enhanced reporting and accountability for all aspects of UNSCR 1325, through the development of a global set of indicators to measure and account for implementation.

We have also provided funding to enhance the wider UN system's response, including through sponsorship of work to develop guidance training for peacekeeping personnel on the protection of women in conflict. In addition, we use our position as a key donor to UN mediation efforts and to the UN's Peacebuilding architecture to ensure that women's participation in conflict-related decision making is improved at all stages of the conflict cycle.

Resolution 1325 (2000) explicitly urged the Secretary-General to appoint more women as Special Representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf. Only nine women have ever been appointed to this role, as country-level Special Representatives. Although all were or are involved in mediation during their missions, the UN has never had a woman in a senior envoy/good offices/mediation role. Part of the UK support to UNIFEM and UN mediation providers is designed to address this shortfall in the near future, commensurate with our wider efforts to see more women, suitably qualified, in senior UN decision-making roles. The current Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has demonstrated positive action in this regard: he has presided over three of the total nine UN female field-level Special Representative appointments and has been responsible for the appointment of a significant number of women to senior leadership positions at UN Headquarters in New York. I hope you will agree that this a welcome development.

The Interagency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security is an internal UN framework for the improvement and monitoring of the UN system's implementation of UNSCR 1325. UN Member States have the opportunity to review the UN's internal progress on UNSR 1325 annually, in the context of an October open debate at the Security Council. 2010 will be no exception. In the course of our efforts to further UNSCR 1325 at the UN, we are in regular contact with all of the entities that comprise the Task Force and their principals. But as a UN Member State, the UK does not have the opportunity to participate in the Task Force's meetings. Equally, since 'Operation 1325' is a grouping of women's organisations, the UK has not attended those meetings in a national capacity.

However, the UK is an active member of the Canadian-led 'Friends of 1325' group, which operates in New York as an advocacy forum amongst the wider UN membership. The UK also hosts its own informal coordination group with key like-minded Member States, meeting monthly, to coordinate activity for implementation of UNSCR 1325 in all relevant UN forum and across the UN system.

The UK also takes action outside the UN to promote women's participation and prevent gender-based violence. We work directly in countries that are affected by, or recovering from conflict. In Afghanistan for instance, the UK has provided £500,000 to implement a 5-year Women's Empowerment programme to promote women's equal participation in governance, build awareness of women's rights among policy makers and provide support for victims of violence and £737,000 to UNIFEM's Elimination of Violence against Women Special Fund.

Centrally, the UK was one of the first nations to develop a National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325, which provides the framework for domestic activity and gives impetus to our global efforts. Achievements to date include the inclusion of SCR 1325 as standard in UN mandates for peacekeeping missions, awareness training for UK personnel and ongoing support for local programmes in conflict situations. The National Action Plan is currently being revised to reflect new UK activity and a public consultation is underway, to ensure that civil society can be involved in the plan's development.

UK activity around resolution 1325 has been reported to members of Parliament and civil society through the Associate Parliamentary Group on UNSCR 1325. The most recent update was provided in October 2009, where three government departments; FCO, DFID and MOD presented their respective activity on this agenda.

Thank you again for raising this important topic. A copy of this letter has been placed in the Library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Royall', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

**JAN ROYALL**