

## **U.S. Civil Society Applauds the Introduction of the Women, Peace, and Security Act**

August 1, 2012

We, the undersigned U.S. civil society organizations, applaud the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate who are cosponsors of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2012.

From its beginning two years ago, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group has been committed to helping the U.S. Government draft a strong National Action Plan. From its inception, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda has had bipartisan support in the United States. In 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 with the backing of a Democratic administration. In 2008, a Republican administration sponsored the follow-up UNSCR1820 recognizing rape as a tactic of war and threat to peace and security, while reiterating the critical role and necessity of having women's voices present in peacemaking. This agenda has both moral and political imperatives. In a world where conflict and violence are increasingly more complex, the U.S. National Action Plan offers a new, essential, and cost-effective means of promoting sustainable peace.

In July 2010, the U.S. Institute of Peace hosted a background briefing session on the UNSCR 1325 that included members of the U.S. Government and civil society. In the months since, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group has met with representatives of federal agencies to encourage the development and launch of the U.S. National Action Plan and then to develop effective implementation plans. Strategy meetings included discussions with agencies such as the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, Homeland Security, as well as the Peace Corps, the National Security Council, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If passed and signed into law, the Women, Peace, and Security Act would:

- Require the Secretary of State to work with counterparts at the Pentagon and USAID to provide the Congress an annual report on women, peace, and security that gives an overview of how U.S. taxpayer dollars are being spent to promote women's inclusion in decision-making pertaining to the prevention of war and promotion of peace, and assesses the impact of such assistance;
- Institute comprehensive training programs on effective means of ensuring women's inclusion and gender perspectives in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery for diplomatic, defense, and development personnel at all levels;
- Encourage the United States to promote and support women mediators and negotiators by eliminating barriers to their equal and secure participation in peace processes, and to support partner governments that demonstrate a commitment to recruiting and retaining women in leadership roles; and
- Recognize the invaluable contributions that U.S. civil society stakeholders have made to U.S. policies and programs on women, peace, and security, and encourage the Administration to continue to consult and utilize the networks and expertise of these stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of the NAP.

Further, we sincerely hope this legislation will encourage the United States to assess the gendered impact of its foreign policy and aid programs to ensure no inadvertent harm is done to women.

Civil society and countries around the world congratulated the United States and President Obama when he announced the U.S. National Action Plan in December 2011 with an Executive Order. The undersigned members of the U.S. Civil Society Working Group and allied organizations welcome the introduction of the Women, Peace, and Security Act and are committed to working with the cosponsors to build support for this important legislation.

Signed:

1. 4Girls GLocal Leadership
2. American Association of University Women (AAUW)
3. American Jewish World Service
4. American Islamic Congress
5. Amnesty International USA
6. Ariana Outreach
7. Center for Caring Economy
8. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
9. Center for Partnership Studies
10. Center for Women Policy Studies
11. Creative Associates
12. Elliott School's Global Gender Program at George Washington University
13. Futures Without Violence
14. Hunt Alternatives, LLC
15. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
16. International Center for Research on Women
17. IREX
18. National Council for Research on Women
19. OWL—Voice of Midlife and Older Women
20. Peace X Peace
21. Prosperity Candle
22. Prosperity Candle L3C
23. Prosperity Catalyst
24. Refugees International
25. SIPRI North America
26. The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy
27. UNA Women
28. United Nations Association of the National Capital Area
29. United Nations Association of the USA
30. US National Committee for UN Women
31. Vital Voices
32. Women Graduates-USA
33. Women Thrive Worldwide
34. Women, Peace and Security Resources
35. Women's Campaign International
36. Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)

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