



The New National Security Strategy

Towards the inclusion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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The **Women, Peace and Security Agenda** was born with the adoption of **UN Council Resolution 1325 (2000)** and marked a historic moment in incorporating the gender issue in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts. Since then, seven resolutions have been adopted - 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) -reinforcing the **commitment of the international community** to meet the particular needs of women and girls in conflict situations, and encourage greater participation of women in peace making and peace building.

Spain was one of the leading countries to approve its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2007, resulting in four follow-up reports. Currently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation is directing the preparation of a new action plan -expected to be finished this year- as a result of the commitment made by President Mariano Rajoy at the UN Security Council in October 2015. To this effect, it is receiving inputs from different Ministries, including the Ministry of Defense and civil society.

This process coincides in time with the publication of Order 115/2017 of 9 February of the Ministry for the Presidency and the Territorial Administrations last 14 February, publishing the **Agreement of the National Security Council** on the procedure for the drawing up of a new 2017 National Security Strategy.

It is a Ministerial Order of special significance, since it provides for the role the **civil society** can play together with representatives of the public and private sector in the future Advisory Committee. This Committee will support the work of the high-level Commission, comprised by authorities from different Ministerial departments, in order to have their voice heard on the draft of the National Security Strategy and receive their potential inputs for its analysis, and where appropriate, its inclusion into the document.

While the **2013 National Security Strategy “A shared Project”** did not address aspects related to the so-called “*Women, Peace and Security*” (WPS) agenda, the **2016 National Security annual report**, published last January, makes reference to Spain’s important contribution in this field, and particularly, to its commitment to international security. Thus, our country has participated in the review of UN mechanisms to adapt peace keeping **operations to the new types of conflicts and security environments** where the UN operates¹.

Furthermore, as the Universal organization itself and its manifold agencies recognize, **sexual violence in conflict situations** has escalated, becoming a **tactic of war and terrorism** directed towards women, children and even men. Likewise, conflicts are especially long-lasting, killing thousands of people, and causing massive displacements and migratory flows which give rise to many internally displaced people and refugees’ camps. All of which while many women continue developing the traditional role of being the sole providers of their families in their countries of origin, trying to preserve cohesion in their community during war and the post-conflict phase.

In these scenarios, women are not only the **victims** of the aforementioned crimes and other **inequality** situations. They also experience situations related to enforced pregnancies and various forms of exploitation, like prostitution, forced labor or slavery, as the UN Security Council Resolution 2331(2016) of 20 December recognizes, which refers to trafficking in persons. The particular importance of this Resolution lies in the fact that, for the first time, it addresses sexual and gender-based violence as part of the strategic objectives of certain terrorist groups, including their funding. Moreover, along with other activities of the transnational organized crime, it can prolong and exacerbate conflicts, as well as intensify their impact on civilian population. Undoubtedly, as the Spanish President emphasized in the United Nations, human trafficking is an assault on human dignity, and represents a threat to international peace and security.

In the light of this reality, it can be stated that **a sustainable peace will be reached when security becomes truly inclusive**, that is, when the capacity of women as **positive agents of change** in their communities is reinforced. Accordingly, it is imperative to promote their empowerment and

¹ *2016 National Security Annual Report*, Ministry for the Presidency and the Territorial Administrations, page 34.

participation in peace processes, ensure their protection, eradicate the underlying causes of sexual violence and inequality, and address impunity to ensure accountability for any type of gender violence, not only against women, but also against boys and girls who suffer it.

The External Action Strategy of October 2014 itself, and the two follow-up reports approved to date, reaffirm the commitments of our country to the protection of women in armed conflicts and their participation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Within this context, Spain actively promotes the principle of the **responsibility to protect**², in such a way that it defends a closer link between the promotion of the Rule of Law, the respect to human rights and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda itself.

In fact, the **2015-2016 Spanish Program as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council** considered the importance of the WPS Agenda, both in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as in the protection of civilians and the respect for Humanitarian International Law and Human Rights³.

Hence, the time is ripe for increasing Spain's level of commitment to the WPS Agenda in the **future National Security Strategy**, and reinforce its comprehensive and multidisciplinary vision to combat the threats which put international stability at risk, particularly that of civilians in crises and conflict situations. Special emphasis should be given to the most vulnerable groups, like women and children. It would be an exceptional opportunity to further publicize- within our country's main document with strategic scope- the important **initiatives** related to the cross-cutting application of gender perspective at all levels. Primarily, in preventive diplomacy, defense diplomacy, projection of stability, gender training in operations and the promotion of this Agenda in other international organizations to which Spain is either a member, namely, the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or an observer, as in the Organization of American States.

As the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres pointed out on the occasion of International Women's Day: "*We can't achieve any of **our goals** without the participation of women and girls*". Therefore, gender issues related to international peace and security concern us all.

Spanish Defence Review, nº 340, June 2017

² *External Action Strategy*, page 50.

³. *2015-2016 Spanish Program, non-permanent member of the UN Security Council*, pages 6-7, and *Balance of 2015 and Priorities for 2016*, page 5.