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Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. Last year, hundreds of events took place across the world to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Across every region, governments reaffirmed that women's participation and leadership are central to peace and security. Beyond commemorations around the actual anniversary, this reaffirmation was made at multiple intergovernmental summits throughout the year.

2. However, there is a vast distance between the commitments across an overwhelming majority of countries and the current state of international peace and security. The women and peace and security agenda has influenced important elements of global and national policy, but this progress has not been matched by the political will, resources and accountability required to confront militarization and transform unequal gender power relations in favour of sustainable peace.

3. In 2025, the number of conflicts worldwide hit a new record high, with the largest number of armed conflicts since 1945, and has doubled in the past 15 years.[1] Global military spending is quickly approaching $3 trillion per year. The harm inflicted on women and girls – from rising levels of sexual and gender-based violence to the high number killed by explosive weapons used in densely populated areas – demonstrates a pattern of attacks carried out with disregard for international law and our common humanity. It also reflects a deeply concerning shift from the rule of law towards the rule of power.

4. At this critical juncture, many governments continue to exclude women from decision-making and conflict resolution, turning away from one of the most proven pathways to sustainable peace. Rather than pursuing inclusive peace agreements that address the root causes of conflict, current efforts often focus narrowly on ceasefires that are frequently short-lived and usually exclude women and girls. While conflicts continue to rage, restrictions on the movement of humanitarian workers, including women humanitarian workers, in several countries are limiting the ability of women and girls to access emergency assistance.

* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

[1] See https://ucdp.uu.se/.

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5. The contraction of foreign aid has constrained gender expertise and capacity across the United Nations system and resulted in an alarming funding crisis for women's organizations, which are the backbone of efforts to build peace and protect women and girls.

6. These trends are compounded by contestation over long-established gender-related terminology and normative frameworks, reflecting not just semantic disagreements but a normative pushback that is eroding existing legal protections and commitments and opening the door to broader rollbacks on the rights of women and girls everywhere. In some conflict-affected countries, State and non-State armed actors have made the spread of misogyny and the suppression of women's rights a defining feature of their conduct, and the persecution of women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, journalists and politicians a central part of their approach. In every region, women's movements and their organizations continue to resist these attempts and to demonstrate resilience and leadership to protect women's rights and safeguard hard-won gains. Sustaining these efforts requires meaningful financial support by governments and regional and international organizations.

7. This report is prepared pursuant to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000); resolution 2122 (2013), in which the Council called for updates on progress, challenges and gaps across all areas of the women and peace and security agenda; and resolution 2493 (2019), in which it called for reinforced measures to implement the agenda in full. The report, which focuses on developments in 2025 and the first half of 2026, is informed by data and analyses provided by entities of the United Nations system, including peace operations and country teams; input from Member States, regional organizations and civil society; and an analysis of other globally recognized data sources. Some of the trends highlighted are set out below:

(a) **Steep increases in numbers of women and girls impacted by conflict.** An estimated 756.1 million women and girls (about 18.8 per cent of the global female population) lived within 50 kilometres of armed conflict in 2025, marking a 5.6 per cent increase from 2024, the highest number and share since the 1990s.[2] Almost 40 per cent of the estimated 426.4 million women and girls living in extreme poverty are in conflict-affected settings;[3]

(b) **Rising militarization and military spending.** World military expenditure increased for the eleventh consecutive year, reaching almost $2.9 trillion in 2025. This is an increase of 2.9 per cent in real terms over 2024 and more than double compared with 2000 levels.[4] If current trends persist and stated pledges to military spending are disbursed, military expenditure could reach between $4.7 trillion and $6.6 trillion by 2035;[5]

(c) **Historic decline in foreign aid.** Bilateral aid to contexts with high and extreme fragility dropped for the fifth year in a row. In 2024, the latest year for which we have data, aid to the value of $21.7 billion supported gender equality, compared

[2] Siri Aas Rustad, *Women Exposed to Armed Conflict, 1990–2025*, Gender, Peace and Security Policy Brief (Oslo, Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2026).

[3] UN-Women calculations using the International Futures model, Pardee Center for International Futures, University of Denver (2026). Figures are modelled estimates and may differ from official Sustainable Development Goals indicator data. See also United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and UN-Women, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2026* (New York, 2026).

[4] See https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge.

[5] See A/80/750; see also https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG_Report_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf.

with $24.6 billion in 2023. Only $2.5 billion was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective;[6]

(d) **Greater exclusion of women from peace negotiations, except when led by the United Nations.** Women made up only 5 per cent of negotiators across 57 peace processes in 2025, down from 7 per cent the year before. In the three peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations, the share of women reached 22 per cent;

(e) **Stagnant representation of women in politics in conflict-affected countries.** Women's global parliamentary representation, which remains notably low at 27 per cent, dropped to 20 per cent in conflict-affected countries.[7] At the local level, women hold 36 per cent of seats in deliberative bodies globally, dropping to 11 per cent in conflict-affected countries;

(f) **The number of national and regional commitments keeps growing.** As of the time of writing, 117 countries had adopted at least one national action plan on women and peace and security, covering more than 2 billion women and girls. This compares to 63 national action plans a decade ago;

(g) **Greater contestation at the Security Council.** The percentage of Security Council decisions that included language on gender-related issues dropped to 46.2 per cent, a decline of 16 percentage points compared with the previous year, registering the lowest level since 2008.

8. The report concludes with time-bound and measurable targets to make tangible progress by the end of the decade, and a call for Member States to uphold international law, guarantee women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in peace and political processes and transitions, conflict prevention and crisis management, and to elevate women's human rights and gender equality as a core marker of every country's foreign policy and the United Nations work on peace and security.

II. Update on progress, gaps and challenges across the women and peace and security agenda

A. Women's leadership and participation

9. Rising geopolitical tensions and democratic erosion are increasingly undermining the norms and institutions that protect women's civil and political rights and freedoms. Coordinated online smear campaigns, misogynistic harassment and threats have been used in many countries to intimidate and deter women's participation in public and political life, with potentially fatal consequences, as illustrated by the targeted killings of Iftihan Al-Mashhari in Yemen, in September 2025, and of Yanar Mohammed in Iraq, in March 2026. Misinformation and disinformation campaigns, amplified by artificial intelligence often with minimum oversight and accountability, are being used to foment gender-based violence, delegitimize gender equality, discredit women leaders, undermine trust in democratic institutions and weaken support for inclusive peace and security processes. In parallel, attempts to remove agreed language on gender equality and women's participation from multilateral agreements, including in the mandates of peacekeeping and political missions, mark a regression from decision-making grounded in human rights.

[6] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Creditor Reporting System database, available at https://data-explorer.oecd.org/ (accessed on 1 May 2026).

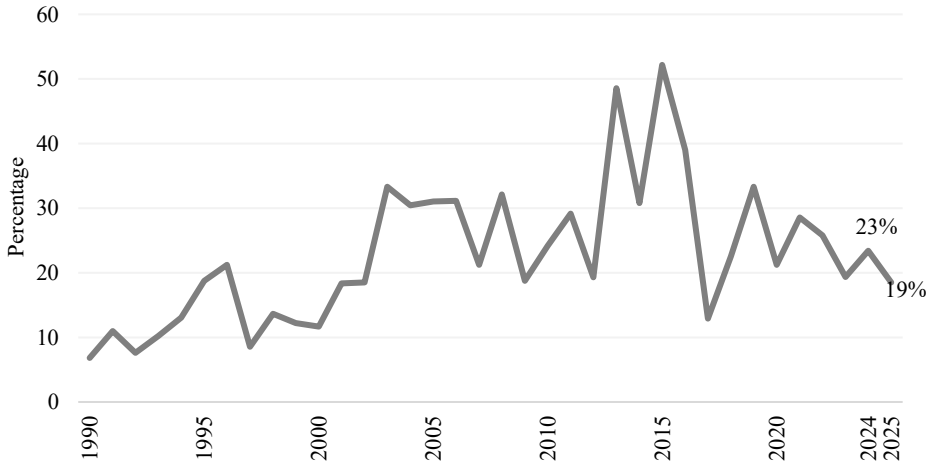
[7] UN-Women analysis of data from https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/03/women-in-politics-2026.

10. These trends are magnified in contemporary conflicts and peace negotiations. The past year has been marked by transactional closed-door negotiations with a focus on conflict management, rather than conflict resolution and addressing root causes. This situation has limited women's access and ability to influence discussions and outcomes. Almost half of all peace agreements reached in 2025 were on pre-negotiation, process or ceasefire arrangements. Although these have helped to place a temporary halt on, or to reduce, hostilities, in many settings, they have not held or translated into comprehensive approaches or outcomes that can chart a path towards long-term political transformation and lasting peace. In several contexts violence has continued or re-erupted.

11. In 2025, only 19 per cent of peace agreements worldwide (10 out of 53 agreements)[8] included at least one reference to women, girls, gender or sexual violence, a drop from the year before (see figure I). In line with the previous year, most of the references appeared in partial agreements from Colombia, elevating the global average of signatories to 18 per cent. Most of the gender-specific references in 2025 pertained to women's participation – affirming its importance, but without specifying substantive measures, such gender quotas. None of the 13 ceasefire agreements that were reached in 2025 and tracked by peace data consortiums named conflict-related sexual violence or other gendered forms of insecurity as prohibited acts.[9] All agreements with gender-specific language pertained to intra-State conflict. Despite a higher degree of internationalization of conflicts and a significant rise in processes producing peace agreements to address conflicts between States, gender-specific references remain absent from such agreements.

Figure I

Percentage of peace agreements with provisions referring to women, girls and gender, 1990–2025



Source: PA-X Peace Agreement Database, version 10. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, University of Edinburgh (accessed June 2026).

Note: Data analysed include inter-State and intra-State peace agreements, including partial agreements. Local agreements are excluded.

[8] The 53 peace agreements (excluding local agreements) refer to agreements accessible through the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, see www.peaceagreements.org/agreements/search/.

[9] See https://peacerep.org/publication/gender-references-in-peace-agreements-in-2025/.

12. While there is great variation across processes, available data for 2025 on women's representation as negotiators, mediators and signatories indicate that women continue to be locked out of key processes. Out of 57 processes reviewed with negotiations or negotiation attempts in 2025, women were represented among negotiating delegations in only 13 processes (23 per cent), and on average women made up 5 per cent of negotiators – a drop from 7 per cent last year. For mediators, the share stood at 14 per cent, the same as last year.[10] Women mediators in 2025 were mostly found among observers and delegation members rather than leads, with some notable exceptions, such as in United Nations-led or co-led processes. Not only does this show little progress from earlier data sets, but the global shares remain far below the recommended minimum one third target set by the United Nations for all processes, whether led by the United Nations or not, with the goal of reaching parity as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In the Sudan, although gender provisions of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan adopted in 2020 set a 40 per cent quota for women in decision-making positions, none of the formal peace negotiations over the past three years have included a single Sudanese woman negotiator.[11] Palestinian and Israeli women have been largely absent from negotiation teams on the conflict in Gaza and remain underrepresented in mechanisms emerging from Security Council resolution 2803 (2025), and this has continued in 2026. For example, several rounds of trilateral talks involving the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States of America were held only among men, although women played key roles in negotiations over exchanges of prisoners of war, as well as in the return of some detained Ukrainian and Russian civilian detainees and the return of Ukrainian children.

13. Since its creation, the United Nations has played a major role as a mediator and in facilitating peace processes, setting standards, building expertise, establishing networks and developing guidance on inclusive peace efforts, including on gender-sensitive ceasefires. The mandates provided to the Organization are clear on women's right to full, equal, meaningful and safe participation. However, the space for the United Nations to directly engage in peace efforts has shrunk. Its role as lead or co-lead in peace processes has declined – from 14 processes, 15 years ago, to 3 in 2025 (concerning Cyprus, the Geneva International Discussions and Libya). In all three processes, the lead mediator for the United Nations was a woman, and women made up on average 22 per cent of the negotiators. Women's representation in United Nations mediation teams has held at 44 per cent over the past five years, although consultations and access to gender expertise have declined in recent years. In Libya, 35 per cent of participants in the United Nations Support Mission in Libya-facilitated structured dialogue were women. The United Nations also established a Libyan women's caucus, composed of women who are members of the dialogue, and supported the development of a Libyan Women's Charter. In processes where the United Nations held a supportive rather than lead role, women's direct participation was lower on average.

14. Beyond the processes that it led or co-led, the United Nations, through its missions and country teams, continued to support women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations supported the engagement of Congolese women with the co-facilitators of the mediation efforts led by the African Union. In instances where women's formal participation was blocked, a mix of strategies was used to ensure that women's priorities reached mediators and their teams. In the Sudan, for instance, the United Nations consulted women and women-led organizations,

[10] UN-Women review of open source and United Nations-reported data.

[11] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/gender-alert-three-years-of-war-sudanese-women-on-the-frontlines-of-humanitarian-and-local-peacebuilding-efforts-en.pdf.

integrating their priorities into mediation efforts including those of the Quintet, which is working to secure the meaningful participation of women in the planned inter-Sudanese civilian dialogue and future political process. In South Sudan, renewed political tensions and rising insecurity threatened implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in 2018, and weakened gains in women's political participation and representation in governance structures. The fragility of recent agreements and the risk of violence re-erupting demonstrate the need for all actors for peace to adopt a longer-term vision.

15. Adoption of the Secretary-General's Common Pledge for Women's Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes has increased to over 40 peace actors,[12] including Member States, regional organizations and other mediating actors. These actors have committed to appointing women mediators and inclusive mediation teams; advocating for women's direct and meaningful participation in negotiation delegations; consulting with a broad range of women leaders and women-led civil society; and securing gender expertise in mediation teams. Updates shared by actors show varying levels of engagement and action. They have supported peace efforts in multiple settings, some through direct mediation and others through political, financial and technical support. Examples include the introduction of requirements for women's participation; advocacy in intergovernmental forums and support for the implementation of peace agreements; direct support to women's networks and peacebuilders, including community-based peacebuilding efforts; and peer-to-peer learning and convening of experts and practitioners. The Common Pledge stakeholders must continue to act as champions and role models across all processes supported. Each peace negotiation held without women's meaningful participation is a missed opportunity to build sustainable solutions that highlight balanced participation, inclusion, cohesion and a whole-of-society approach.

16. The number of women mediator networks has continued to grow at the regional and national levels. The Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks now includes eight networks.[13] Women's mediator networks may sustain dialogue when official channels collapse, bridging local, national, regional and international actors and formal and informal peace efforts, and maintaining civic and mediation capacities during protracted crises and transitions. However, many networks report facing pressure to demonstrate their relevance and impact, along with inadequate political backing and resources from the Member States that supported their establishment.

17. Across regions, the work of women peacebuilders increasingly straddles humanitarian response and peace efforts, with women's visible leadership becoming essential for crisis response, civic mobilization, community mediation and localized peacebuilding and reconciliation. In Lebanon, as women-led organizations played a crucial role in preventing or mitigating aid-related conflicts in collective shelters, by countering misinformation and mediating disputes between displaced persons and host communities, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) found that 80 per cent of them did so without any funding or remuneration, and few women were represented in municipal councils and crisis cells, even at the local level. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women mediators helped to reduce tensions between Hema and Lendu communities and secured commitments from armed groups to end retaliatory violence against women and children. There is a wealth of examples of women-led peace work at the community level in many settings, but these receive little visibility. While dependence on women front-line peacebuilders has increased, there is not enough recognition of

[12] See https://peacemaker.un.org/en/thematic-areas/gender-women-peace-security/common-pledge.
[13] See https://www.globalwomenmediators.org/.

the psychological toll of sustained activism and political engagement under conditions of conflict, displacement, repression and chronic underresourcing.

18. The roles played by legislators and appointees to senior governmental positions at the national or local levels, including diplomatic posts, often serve as important pathways for formal and direct engagement in peace and recovery processes. However, men overwhelmingly hold these positions. The latest data show that women hold just 27 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. In conflict-affected countries, their representation falls to 20 per cent.[14] At the local level, women account for 36 per cent of elected members in deliberative bodies globally. In conflict-affected countries with data, this share drops to only 11 per cent.[15] Evidence continues to show that legislated gender quotas make a clear difference.[16] In conflict-affected countries with quotas, women hold 25 per cent of parliamentary seats, compared with just 11 per cent in countries without quotas. At the local level the difference is even greater, with women holding 22 per cent of local seats where quotas exist, compared with just 6 per cent where they do not.[17]

19. Similar to legislatures, women's representation in the executive branch falls far short of parity. For every country led by a woman, six are led by men. Women comprise just 22 per cent of Cabinet members globally, a share that has declined over the past two years, pointing to a lack of political will to employ targeted appointments and other special measures. In conflict-affected countries, women's representation is even lower, averaging only 20 per cent. Inequalities can also be seen across portfolios held by Cabinet ministers,[18] and in the resources available to ministries to carry out their work. In conflict-affected countries, the disparities are sharper: men overwhelmingly head the ministries responsible for home affairs (97 per cent), finance (94 per cent), defence (91 per cent), justice (90 per cent) and foreign affairs (85 per cent).[19] This dominance extends to senior diplomatic roles, where men hold the majority of Permanent Representative positions: 83 per cent in New York, 72 per cent in Geneva and 69 per cent in Vienna, as of May 2026. Such concentration of power limits the diversity of perspectives shaping decision-making and ultimately weakens peace processes and post-conflict recovery.

20. Political transitions, elections and constitution-making processes following conflict and instability present both opportunities and risks for advancing gender equality. As such, the United Nations, including through its Electoral Assistance Division, relevant special political missions, and entities such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN-Women, continued to offer support to guide and promote gender-responsive electoral processes. All United Nations-led electoral needs assessments reports in 2025 included gender-specific analysis and recommendations, and consultations were held with women's organizations. For example, in the most extensive electoral operations ever in the Central African Republic, including the first municipal elections since 1988, women achieved near parity (46 per cent) at that level. However, many challenges remain. In Somalia, there has been stagnation in women's political representation despite legal codification of the 30 per cent quota. The gap between law and implementation reflects the influence

[14] UN-Women analysis of data from https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/03/women-in-politics-2026.

[15] UN-Women analysis of data from https://localgov.unwomen.org/ and SDG Global Database indicator 5.5.1, available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal (information as at 1 January 2026).

[16] See https://genderquota.org/.

[17] UN-Women analysis of data from https://localgov.unwomen.org/ and SDG Global Database indicator 5.5.1, available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal (information as at 1 January 2026).

[18] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/women-in-politics-map-2026-en.pdf.

[19] UN-Women data as at 1 January 2026 based on countries with available data.

of clan and political structures led by men on candidate selection that favours men as candidates, weak enforcement of the quota, the perception of the quota as externally imposed rather than locally owned and limited financial and institutional support for women candidates. In the transitional People's Assembly in the Syrian Arab Republic, women won 5.1 per cent of its indirectly elected seats and 15 of the 70 members appointed by the President are women, bringing overall parliamentary representation of women to 10.6 per cent. For the indirect elections, Syrian women represented around 18 per cent of the electoral colleges and 13 per cent of candidates. In Myanmar, the military-controlled elections offered no credible pathway for women's political inclusion and further entrenched male-dominated political structures.

21. A concerning trend is the risk of normalization of violence in politics. Hate speech and targeted violence against women in politics remain pervasive, posing a significant barrier to women's full and equal participation in political and public life. Evidence from recent elections shows that women candidates experience multiple forms and staggering levels of violence both online, through social and traditional media, and in-person. LGBTQI+ persons seeking or holding office often face additional threats and dangers. In Libya, an analysis of online content in the first half of 2025 concluded that the main goal of nearly 80 per cent of cases of online violence was to demoralize and deter women from public participation.[20]

22. Globally, media censorship, challenges to genuine electoral competition and restrictions on civil society have in some contexts narrowed democratic space, with gender equality and women's rights increasingly also drawn into political bargaining. In many settings, large-scale protests erupted in the past year, with women and youth at the forefront of democratic resistance and calls for change. Efforts to crack down on resistance movements have often turned violent. In June 2026 in Herat, Afghanistan, women mobilized to push back against increased restrictions despite escalating repression from the de facto authorities.[21] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has noted a growing trend of State-sponsored Internet shutdowns. The annual report by Access Now recorded 313 shutdowns in 52 countries in 2025 – the highest annual total since monitoring began.[22] Myanmar had 95 recorded Internet shutdowns in 2025, the most of any country.[23] Other prominent examples include the shutdowns in Afghanistan in 2025, and the blackout in the Islamic Republic of Iran in January 2026, and again from March to May, which severely restricted access to information as violence escalated.[24]

23. The patterns of underrepresentation are mirrored in international decision-making forums that address the pressing issues of the day. There have been incremental shifts regarding women's participation in bodies that address arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Yet, at leadership levels and among heads of delegations, men remain in the majority, despite evidence that stakeholders from more diverse backgrounds tend to hold different attitudes towards weapons, including nuclear weapons, based on their lived experience and vision for the future.[25] In climate negotiations, women's participation in delegations has increased, but the majority are still led by men as head of delegation. Across forums, young women face significant barriers to influencing decision-making. Indigenous Peoples, including

[20] See https://www.undp.org/arab-states/stories/empowering-women-arab-states-region-raising-awareness-digital-violence-and-building-safer-online-spaces.

[21] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167699.

[22] See https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/KeepItOn-Internet-Shutdowns-2025-Annual-Report.pdf.

[23] Ibid.

[24] See https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/11/gender-alert-impact-of-telecommunication-shutdown-on-women.

[25] See https://unidir.org/publication/from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream-advancing-intersectional-gender-analysis-of-nuclear-non-proliferation-and-disarmament/.

Indigenous women leaders, have demanded a seat at the table as decision makers in climate action and peace, as expressed strongly at the Second Global Summit on Indigenous Peacebuilding. Displaced and stateless women, including refugees, asylum-seekers, or those without legal documentation, face exclusion from formal decision-making on the basis of their gender and legal status and as a result of additional travel restrictions. Sustained advocacy and coordination by the United Nations have contributed to nearly three quarters of humanitarian country teams now including local women's organizations as members.

24. The continued exclusion from peacemaking and conflict resolution of the voices and lived realities of those most affected by conflict risks locking the world into a spiralling cycle of unabating conflict and violence. Peace and political processes that produce agreements that do not reflect societies' needs or command their ownership or advance accountability will keep feeding the conflict cycle.

B. Upholding international law and protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and crises

25. The number of active armed conflicts has more than doubled in the past 15 years, and conflicts are becoming deadlier. These trends are eroding our shared sense of humanity and subverting the human rights of women and girls. The pattern is evident in the systematic suppression of women's human rights in Afghanistan under the Taliban, gender-based restrictions and targeted attacks by armed groups in Libya, Mali, Somalia and Yemen, the high number of women and girls killed and injured in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the widespread use of sexual violence by armed actors, among others, in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and the Sudan, and widespread attacks on women human rights defenders and organizations everywhere.[26]

26. In 2025, the United Nations documented more than 37,000 civilians killed across 20 armed conflicts.[27] One in four deaths was of a woman or girl. Due to gender-related assumptions about combatants, civilian men are still more likely to be killed in war, but the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas has increased the number of casualties among women and girls. This is especially true for air strikes directed at residential homes, schools, health facilities, markets and camps for displaced people, without regard for international law. In Myanmar, the United Nations verified 982 civilian deaths from air strikes in 2025, including at least 368 women and 232 children, and the real number is likely much higher.[28] In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, at least 38,000 women and girls were killed in Gaza between October 2023 and December 2025.[29] An additional 11,000 women and girls are estimated to have sustained life-changing injuries resulting in permanent disability, and women and girls continued to be killed after the ceasefire reached in October 2025, albeit at a lower rate.[30] In Ukraine, casualties among women increased by 27 per cent in 2025 compared with the previous year, representing 40 per cent of all civilian casualties.[31] In the Sudan, reports of mass killings of civilians in El Fasher,

[26] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms/human-rights-indicators/sdg-indicators-under-ohchrs-custodianship/human-rights-count; and S/2026/321.
[27] See S/2026/390.
[28] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/myanmar/human-situation-update-myanmar-2025-en.pdf.
[29] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/advocacy-brief-the-cost-of-war-in-gaza-on-women-and-girls-en.pdf.
[30] Ibid.
[31] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-briefing/2026/05/war-in-ukraine-becomes-deadlier-for-women-and-girls-more-than-1500-days-after-full-scale-invasion.

including women and girls, bore the hallmarks of genocide according to the independent international fact-finding mission for the Sudan.[32] As the Rapid Support Forces took over the city after 500 days of siege, nearly 500 patients and their companions were killed in the Saudi Maternity Hospital, one of many health facilities attacked.[33] At least 54 girls and 26 teachers, all of them women,[34] in addition to 66 boys and 4 parents, were reportedly killed by a missile in an elementary school in Minab on 28 February 2026, the first day of the attacks by the United States and Israel on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

27. As a consequence of the increase in warfare, the number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence verified by the United Nations has more than doubled since the previous year and cases have almost quadrupled since 2022.[35] The list of State and non-State actors implicated in patterns of conflict-related sexual violence has now reached 77 parties, and two thirds of them have appeared in the list for multiple years without taking any corrective action. The cases verified by the United Nations are indicative, but do not reflect the true scale of the problem. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, across several eastern provinces, service providers registered tens of thousands of cases of sexual violence, mainly perpetrated by armed actors, while ceasefire agreements failed to mention accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. According to CARE International, sudden shortages of post-exposure prophylaxis kits left thousands of survivors without essential medication to prevent HIV transmission as the result of rape.[36] In the Sudan, warring parties have weaponized sexual and gender-based violence and the number of women and girls requiring support after experiencing such violence has quadrupled since the start of the war three years ago. In Haiti, the United Nations reported a 163 per cent increase in cases of sexual violence in 2025.[37] The overwhelming majority of verified cases were incidents of collective rape.

28. Less is known about the impact that war has on the mental health of women and girls, or the violence they suffer at home. In Ukraine, war-related distress has contributed to higher rates of depression among women and girls. There has also been a 36 per cent increase in gender-based violence between 2022 and early 2025, driven by war-related distress and precarity.[38] An independent study of adolescent girls affected by the education ban in Afghanistan found that nearly 90 per cent reported symptoms of depression and almost half reported suicidal thoughts.[39] While 1 in 3 women have experienced gender-based violence globally, that rate is typically twice as high in several conflict-affected countries.[40] That violence causes trauma, disabilities and in many cases, death.

29. Conflicts have other life-or-death consequences for women, particularly with respect to their reproductive rights and autonomy. A woman giving birth in a country affected by conflict is five times more likely to die of maternity-related causes than a woman in stable countries.[41] In 2023 alone, an estimated 160,000 women died from

[32] See A/HRC/61/77.
[33] See https://www.unocha.org/news/emergency-relief-chief-warns-security-council-attacks-el-fasher-recall-horrors-darfur-endured; and https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/news/at-the-edge-of-war-the-central-african-republics-uneasy-border-with-sudan?utm.
[34] See https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/03/usa-iran-those-responsible-for-deadly-and-unlawful-us-strike-on-school-that-killed-over-100-children-must-be-held-accountable/.
[35] See S/2026/321 and S/PV.9378.
[36] See https://www.care.org/media-and-press/emergency-kits-run-out-alongside-hope-for-drc-sexual-violence-survivors/.
[37] See S/2026/321.
[38] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1160291.
[39] See https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(26)00822-6/fulltext.
[40] See https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240116962.
[41] See https://www.who.int/news/item/17-02-2026-conflict-and-instability-make-pregnancy-more-dangerous.

preventable maternal causes in fragile and conflict-affected settings.[42] This shocking number is often the result of intentional policy choices that in some cases amount to reproductive violence,[43] including the destruction of reproductive healthcare or infrastructure. In Gaza, the widespread destruction and repeated targeting of hospitals, maternity wards, fertility clinics and neonatal units, combined with delays in reaching facilities due to movement restrictions, and shortages of medical supplies, electricity, fuel, food and clean water due to the obstruction of humanitarian aid, resulted in a 41 per cent decrease in live births[44] and a 300 per cent increase in miscarriages.[45] In Myanmar, access restrictions and attacks against health facilities in Rakhine State and elsewhere led to a surge in preventable deaths, including among Rohingya women, and an unprecedented rise in acute malnutrition among nursing mothers.[46] In Afghanistan, the combination of banning women from medical study, conditioning women's access to health clinics on men's permission, bans on contraception and steep funding cuts may result in a preventable crisis of maternal deaths.

30. Attacks on education increased sharply worldwide in 2024 and 2025. During this period, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack recorded at least 9,259 attacks on education, 50 per cent higher than in 2022–2023 and equivalent to an average of 11 attacks every day. These attacks injured or killed at least 10,600 students and education personnel in schools and universities.[47] Today, 127 million primary and secondary school-age children and young people living in crisis-affected countries are out of school,[48] and girls in these settings are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls in non-crisis settings.[49] Afghanistan remains the only country globally where women and girls are banned from education beyond the sixth grade. As of 2025, 2.2 million girls remain banned from school, and this number is projected to reach 4 million by 2030, with no signs that this policy will be reversed. According to surveys in Afghanistan, 91 per cent of respondents report that the de facto authorities do not share their values regarding educational opportunities for girls.[50]

31. At the end of 2025, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at 117.8 million – 1 in every 70 people globally – with women and children accounting for approximately 60 per cent of the total.[51] Unsafe or premature return movements increased in 2025, and many of the returns occurred under adverse circumstances to fragile contexts where reintegration conditions remain extremely challenging. Displacement sharply increases vulnerabilities and protection risks for women and girls, heightening their exposure to poverty, food insecurity, gender-based violence and other harmful practices, like child marriage, survival sex or female genital mutilation. The average prevalence of child marriage in conflict-affected countries is 14.4 percentage points higher than in non-conflict settings.[52] Armed conflicts typically increase the percentage of women-headed households, and these households are more food insecure on average across most humanitarian emergencies. In the Sudan, the risk of

[42] Ibid.
[43] See Human Rights Council resolution 62/18.
[44] See https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-warns-catastrophic-birth-outcomes-gaza-amid-starvation-psychological-trauma-and.
[45] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf.
[46] See A/80/307.
[47] See https://protectingeducation.org/publication/education-under-attack-2026/.
[48] See https://www.unesco.org/en/emergencies/education/data.
[49] See https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/girls-education-conflict-most-risk-heres-how-reach-them.
[50] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/afghanistan-gender-alert-2025-08-en.pdf, p. 6.
[51] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Refugee Data Finder, available at https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries (accessed June 2026).
[52] See E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1.

severe food insecurity for women-led households was triple that of households led by men.[53] In Lebanon, nearly a quarter of all women and girls were forced to flee their homes following the intensification of conflict and mass evacuation orders issued by the Israel Defense Forces in March 2026.[54] Against the backdrop of overlapping crises, the number of women and girls facing crisis-level hunger or worse is expected to increase by 144,000 in the coming months.[55] In South Sudan, nearly 60 per cent of those displaced since the start of 2026 were women and girls, as fighting intensified in Jonglei State. Many report eating wild plants to survive and going for days without anything to eat.[56]

32. In many of these crises, these trends are exacerbated by broad restrictions on women's rights imposed by governments and non-State actors, and attacks against those who defend these rights. In Afghanistan, the number of edicts institutionalizing the systematic repression of the human rights of women and girls has continued to grow.[57] While Afghanistan is the most extreme manifestation of systematic suppression of women's and girls' rights worldwide, armed actors enforced similar rules in areas under their control in Mali, Somalia and Yemen, among others. Terrorist groups in the Sahel, which use sexual violence and abductions of women and girls as part of their repertoire of violence, also impose rigorous social rules restricting women and girls' appearance and presence in public spaces. In Burkina Faso, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 120 women and 38 girls were abducted by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State Sahel Province in 2025. Many of these women and girls may never return home. Of the estimated 6,417 Yazidis who were abducted by Da'esh 12 years ago, 1,221 women remain missing.[58]

33. The number of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists killed or forcibly disappeared worldwide in 2025 reached 950, more than double the number from a decade ago. Men represented the majority of reported cases, but women were targeted too.[59] In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran found patterns of gender persecution.[60] The surveillance and detention of women human rights defenders reportedly worsened following the military escalation in the Middle East in February 2026.[61] In Myanmar[62] and Yemen,[63] women continue to be the victims of doxing, online threats and technology-facilitated violence with the use of weaponized fake images to silence women and extort their families, often with devastating impact on their lives. In Myanmar, at least 6,334 women have been arbitrarily arrested on political grounds since the military coup of 2021, and reports document persistent abuse in detention.[64] In South Sudan, as violence in Jonglei and Upper Nile intensified, women journalists, lawyers, peace activists, local organizers and human rights defenders were subjected to growing surveillance and intimidation during community

[53] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/08/women-led-households-at-triple-risk-of-severe-food-insecurity-in-sudan.
[54] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2026/04/displaced-women-return-home-in-lebanon-i-saw-destruction-everywhere.
[55] UN-Women estimate based on Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data.
[56] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2026/04/more-than-100-women-and-girls-displaced-every-hour-in-south-sudan-some-going-days-without-food.
[57] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2026/08/five-years-after-the-taliban-takeover-the-normalization-of-the-exclusion-of-women-and-girls-in-afghanistan.
[58] See S/2026/321.
[59] See https://innovation.ohchr.org/rightscount/.
[60] See A/HRC/61/60.
[61] Information based on media reporting analysis by UN-Women.
[62] See A/HRC/63/21.
[63] See S/2025/650.
[64] See A/HRC/63/21.

peace dialogues.[65] A recent survey found that 70 per cent of women human rights defenders, activists, journalists and media workers across the world have experienced online violence in the course of their work, and 24 per cent reported online violence assisted by artificial intelligence.[66]

34. Several of the top donors to implementation of the women and peace and security agenda have increased their support to women human rights defenders. For example, the European Union reported that its Human Rights Defenders Mechanism assisted almost 5,800 women human rights defenders in 2025. As women human rights defenders fled the advance of Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provided support to hundreds of these defenders through local protection networks and digital platforms for alerts, as well as targeted mission responses and commitments from armed groups, embedded in local agreements, to halt retaliatory violence against women.

35. However, the greatest source of support for women human rights defenders at risk is still local women's organizations, and the sharp contraction of foreign aid in 2025 forced a significant percentage of them to suspend programmes or close altogether.[67] Services to support women's reproductive health, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, or provide nutrition to pregnant and lactating women or women-headed households have seen significant cuts. In 2025, nearly a third of facilities supported by the United Nations Population Fund were forced to shut down, and 400,000 pregnant women in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to struggle to access essential maternity services. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was forced to halt or suspend approximately $1.4 billion in assistance programmes in mid-2025, leading to major reductions in access to life-saving services for refugee survivors of conflict-related sexual violence from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. Only 18 per cent of funding needs were met in six regional refugee response plans, compared with 46 per cent in 2024. Over 250 safe spaces for women and girls have been forced to close.[68]

36. Beyond the impact of funding cuts, gender-based discrimination made it harder to reach women and girls with humanitarian aid and protection services, especially as armed actors obstructed the work of women humanitarian workers. Earlier this year, M23 inspected the premises of humanitarian actors collecting data on conflict-related sexual violence in North Kivu, accusing them of inventing such data.[69] In September 2025, the Taliban started to strictly enforce a previous ban on Afghan women accessing United Nations premises, which has further hindered the Organization's ability to have aid delivered to women by women. In November 2025, for example, the United Nations had to temporarily suspend its assistance at the Islam Qala border crossing, as the Taliban prevented women personnel from assisting returnees. More than 1,000 humanitarians were killed in the three years from 2023 to 2025, triple the number killed during the preceding three-year period.[70] In 2025, 88 United Nations staff were killed, 32 of whom were women.[71]

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[65] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2026/02/south-sudan-forgotten-crisis-demands-worlds-attention-turk.

[66] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/04/tipping-point-online-violence-impacts-manifestations-and-redress-in-the-ai-age.

[67] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/07/1167908.

[68] See https://www.unfpa.org/press/unfpa-funding-cuts-undermine-maternal-health-systems-worldwide-putting-millions-risk.

[69] See S/2026/466.

[70] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/04/1167267.

[71] See A/81/71.

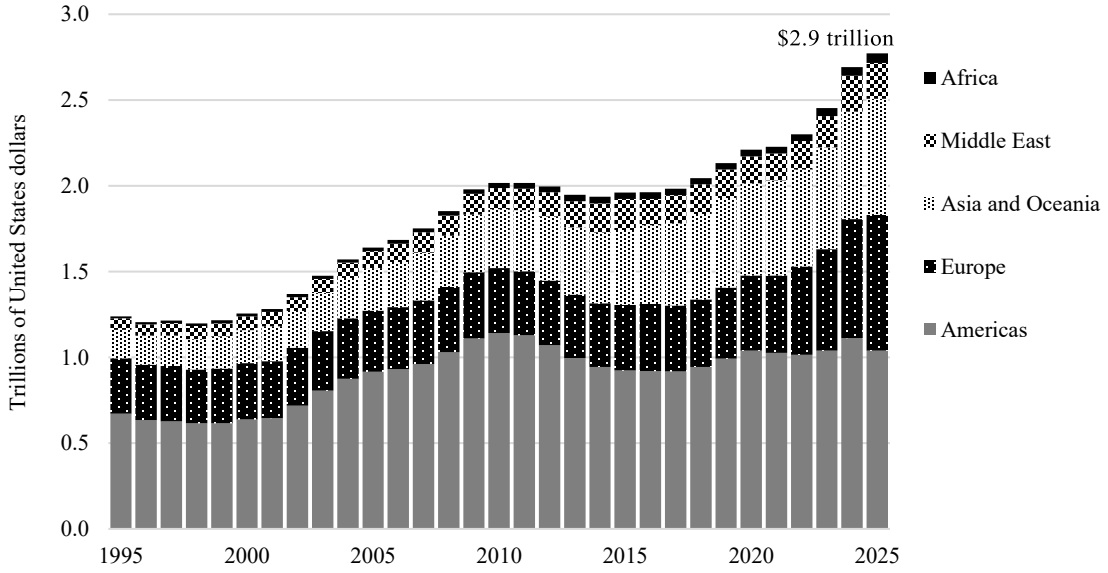
C. Prevention, peacebuilding and recovery

37. A decade ago, the global study on women and peace and security warned that the world was losing sight of the key demands of the women's movement that pushed for the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): reducing military expenditures, controlling the availability of armaments, promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution and fostering a culture of peace.[72] This warning rings louder today. The world is spending far more on waging war than building peace even as poverty, hunger and inequality are on the rise, climate change accelerates and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is regressing.

38. Member States have recognized the need to find the way back to a path that fosters prevention, peacebuilding and recovery. In the Pact for the Future,[73] Member States committed to redouble efforts to build and sustain peaceful, inclusive and just societies and to accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. More recently, in the identical resolutions on the 2025 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture,[74] the Security Council and the General Assembly reaffirmed commitments to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, while reaffirming the important role of women and youth. These outcomes reiterate the importance of creating conditions to allow peace to take hold and flourish. Building and sustaining peace is not a one-off intervention.[75]

39. Rising militarization and runaway military spending is taking us away from those goals. Increased military expenditure has not made the world safer. In 2025, world military expenditure reached $2.9 trillion – the eleventh consecutive year of growth (see figure II).

Figure II
Global military expenditure, 1995–2025



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database (accessed April 2026).

[72] See https://wps.unwomen.org/index.html.
[73] See General Assembly resolution 79/1.
[74] See Security Council resolution 2805 (2025) and General Assembly resolution 80/11.
[75] See https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/news/peace-is-a-verb-international-day-of-peace-2025.

40. We are witnessing unprecedented levels of war profiteering by the arms industry, military contractors and shareholders. In his report on The Security We Need,[76] the Secretary-General outlines actionable steps for breaking the chilling trajectory of rising military build-up: placing diplomacy first, strengthening confidence-building measures, ensuring transparency in defence budgets, and redirecting even a fraction of military spending towards sustainable development.

41. These trends are placing pressure on national budgets and priorities, increasing debt burdens, reproducing systems and cultures of violence, and disproportionately affecting women. Some countries allocate a significantly larger share of public spending to militaries than to essential services such as health, education and social protection. Notably, the increase in military spending is not matched by a similar increase in efforts by countries to prevent war and to build and sustain peace, including through the United Nations. The United Nations regular budget for 2025 was $3.72 billion – global military spending was 776 times that amount.[77] The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has seen its budget nearly cut in half, and the budget cuts to the United Nations have forced the Organization to dramatically scale down its presence and reach in countries affected by conflict and crisis. These reductions are happening in spite of the proven effectiveness of women-led conflict prevention and community mediation. In 2025, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund supported over 15,000 women actively engaged in conflict prevention, resulting in over 992,000 community and individual-level conflicts being averted or resolved through local, regional and national gender-responsive mechanisms, or referred to such mechanisms. In the Central African Republic, where the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic has invested for years in women-led conflict prevention, 35 per cent of the members of the 66 local peace and reconciliation committees across the country are women, and community violence in the north-west and south-east of the country has been reduced by 40 per cent since 2021.[78] In southern Chad, local authorities established an early warning mechanism that links pastoralists and farmers to local peace committees; 48 per cent of the members of this mechanism are now women.[79] Radically scaling up investments in building peace from the ground up could change the trajectory of many current conflicts.

42. Women's peace movements have been pioneering architects of several momentous breakthroughs to regulate, restrict or eliminate certain weapons, including the Arms Trade Treaty and article 7 (4) thereof, which requires States to evaluate the risk that proposed arms transfers could be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children before authorizing an export. These instruments, designed to uphold global peace and prevent civilian harm, are now at risk of being hollowed out. There is little documentation of countries taking human rights concerns or article 7 (4) of the Treaty into account in arms transfer decisions, despite the unspeakable horrors women and children experience in current conflicts, including as a result of the weaponized use of new technologies such as drones. The repeated failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to reach consensus, including at the 2026 Review Conference, alongside recent exits from the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster

[76] See https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG_Report_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf.
[77] See https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/arms-races-do-not-lead-to-peace.
[78] See S/2024/730.
[79] See A/80/651.

Munitions, sparked renewed appeals for safeguarding the norms designed to protect civilians from immediate and long-term civilian harm.[80]

43. The global proliferation and spread of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition remain a paramount threat to peace. A growing number of countries have integrated references to arms control, ammunition management and disarmament in their national action plans on women and peace and security. As of 2025, 54.7 per cent of national action plans (64 out of 117) included such references, an increase from 39.3 per cent in 2024.[81] This is important given the stark evidence on how the spread of arms and ammunition contributes directly and decisively to sharp increases in gender-based violence in countries affected by conflict and high levels of armed violence.[82] However, deeper analysis shows that references are most often confined to introductory sections rather than the proposed actions.[83]

44. Building peace also means helping people leave violence behind. From Colombia to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives form a vital part of breaking cycles of conflict and violence, yet women and girls are still often excluded due to stigma, restrictive eligibility criteria and data gaps. Community violence reduction initiatives, particularly those that adopt a gender and youth lens, hold promise as pathways for change. For example, in Haiti, community violence reduction mediation and training initiatives supported by the United Nations, involving women leaders and women community police representatives, contributed to the separation of 53 children from gangs.

45. Security sector reform remains a central building block for prevention, peacebuilding and recovery. Gender-responsive security sector reform has helped to build more diverse security institutions that are better equipped to respond to the needs of the communities they protect. Conversely, patriarchal structures legitimize violence and contribute to conflict, with security abuses more prevalent in environments where these norms are entrenched. Initiatives supported by the United Nations brough about change in several settings. For example, the findings and recommendations of a barrier assessment study on women's meaningful participation in the security sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were integrated into national security policy. In Libya, the United Nations convened women activists to strengthen their engagement in the security sector and ensure that women's perspectives would inform ceasefire implementation and the work of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. In Lebanon, the establishment of the Gender Department within the Lebanese Armed Forces translated gender commitments into operational practices through the adoption of a policy on sexual harassment and domestic violence, the appointment of more than 85 gender focal points and the deployment of mixed patrols, with the support of a female assessment/analysis and support team. However, women's representation in security institutions continues to lag in many other contexts. In 2026, the United Nations launched a Portal on Women in Justice and Security[84] to collect global data and good practices on women's inclusion across police, corrections, justice, military justice and mine action.

46. Women's economic empowerment remains an overlooked strategy for peacebuilding and recovery. Previous reports on women and peace and security have detailed the detrimental impacts of economic inequality and restricted access to

[80] See for instance https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/05/1167580; and https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/exhibits/forward-not-fragmented.

[81] Analysis by the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

[82] See https://unidir.org/publication/deploying-the-arms-control-and-disarmament-toolbox/; and S/2026/321.

[83] See https://unidir.org/ToolkitWPS.

[84] See https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/portal-women-justice-and-security.

resources on women and girls in conflict and crisis settings. At the time of writing, 426.4 million women and girls worldwide (10.3 per cent) live in extreme poverty, including 162.9 million in conflict-affected settings. Without accelerated action, 410.9 million women and girls could still be trapped in extreme poverty by 2030.[85] Policies and programmes that enable women – including refugee and displaced women – the right to access work, housing, education, healthcare, legal documentation and financial instruments have been proven to increase self-reliance and autonomy, reduce aid dependency and contribute to the stability and prosperity of wider society.

47. Data on employment, access to resources, social protection and unpaid work show stark disparities between women and men. The gender employment gap remains significant, nearly a quarter lower for women worldwide. This gap has narrowed by only 4 percentage points in over 30 years.[86] In conflict-affected countries, only 37.0 per cent of working-age women were employed, compared to 65.2 per cent of men, with significant differences between contexts.[87] The 2026 Middle East crisis is reversing decades of gains in women's economic empowerment and deepening gender inequalities, with an estimated 34,000 to 56,000 women's jobs in the private sector immediately at risk and 4.6 million women employed in public service sectors potentially affected by medium-term fiscal pressure.[88] In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the war reshaped household composition and care roles in Gaza. Now more than 1 in 7 families – 58,600 households – are led by a woman.[89] In the West Bank, the imposition of restrictive movement policies, compounded by rising settler violence, has disrupted women's access to essential services, deepening their economic insecurity and dependence.[90]

48. Across conflict-affected settings, women find themselves trapped in informal, underpaid and vulnerable employment, with 80.4 per cent of employed women working in the informal economy.[91] The situation is particularly challenging in agriculture, forestry and fishing, where nearly all women are informally employed. Furthermore, less than one third of women in agricultural households own or have secure rights over agricultural land, compared with half of men.[92] Efforts to promote equality and secure women's livelihoods must also address barriers to financial and digital agency and inclusion. In 2024, only 36.8 per cent of women in conflict-affected countries owned a bank account or had access to mobile money service, compared with 46.5 per cent for men and the global average of 76.6 per cent for women.[93] Digital access also remains limited: 69.4 per cent of women in conflict-

[85] UN-Women calculations using the International Futures model, Pardee Center for International Futures, University of Denver (2026). Figures are modelled estimates and may differ from official Sustainable Development Goals indicator data.

[86] See https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/IWD_draft_STATISTICS_GEDIfinal 050325DOI.pdf.

[87] UN-Women analysis of employment-to-population ratio using data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), ILO Modelled Estimates database, available at https://ilostat.ilo.org/methods/concepts-and-definitions/ilo-modelled-estimates/.

[88] See https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/policy-brief_may26_ba-05.pdf.

[89] See https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2025/10/facts-figures-two-years-of-war-on-gaza-the-toll-on-women-and-girls#_ftn5.

[90] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/occupied-palestinian-territory-overview-report-east-jerusalem-practices-en.pdf.

[91] Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.3.1. Data from SDG Global database, available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal (accessed July 2026).

[92] Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.1. Unweighted average. Data from SDG Global database.

[93] World Bank Open Data, available at https://data.worldbank.org/ (accessed June 2026).

affected countries owned a mobile phone, 8 percentage points below the global average for women.[94]

49. Compounding these challenges is the severely limited access to social protection in conflict-affected settings. In Mali, South Sudan and Yemen, for example, fewer than 1 in 10 women are covered by at least one social protection benefit, compared with the global average of 1 in 2 women.[95] In addition, the destruction of health, education, water and social services during conflict and crisis is shifting care responsibilities onto households. Globally, women and girls bear most of this increased unpaid care burden, constraining women's participation in paid employment and girl's access to education. In conflict-affected countries with available data, women and girls devote 5 times as many hours to unpaid domestic and care work as men and boys, substantially higher than the global average (2.5 times more).[96] Across conflicts, women are expected to fill the gaps left behind by collapsing systems. As war-ravaged provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo face another outbreak of Ebola virus disease, a majority of confirmed cases are women and girls, because they care for the sick.[97]

50. The past year saw growing recognition of the care economy, social protection and local enterprise development as essential pillars of peacebuilding and recovery.[98] Across Latin America, a care revolution is under way, providing good practice to translate into peacebuilding and recovery policy and practice. Governments, private sector companies, women and communities are rewriting the rules, turning what was once considered a woman's unpaid job into public policy, services and a shared responsibility.[99] At the sixteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Tlatelolco Commitment, which establishes a decade of action to advance the achievement of substantive gender equality and recognizes the care society as a paradigm for sustainable development, equality and peace.

51. In 2025, interventions to support women's economic empowerment in conflict and crisis settings varied in scope and scale. For example, in Georgia, a landmark policy achievement was the approval of an economic empowerment programme to support internally displaced women, institutionalizing targeted economic support for internally displaced women as a standing Government commitment. This marked a shift from project-based assistance towards State-led economic inclusion for internally displaced women. In Somalia and South Sudan, the International Labour Organization (ILO) supported the adoption of gender-responsive labour migration policies and recruitment regulations through inclusive tripartite processes involving women's organizations and trade unions, expanding women's access to safe and decent work. In Ukraine, where women have increasingly entered non-traditional and male-dominated sectors due to labour shortages and war-related disruptions, ILO supported around 424,000 women in accessing employment services. In addition,

[94] Data on cell phone use for women in conflict-affected countries from Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Women, Peace and Index 2025/26, available at https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/. The global average data came from SDG Global database.

[95] Sustainable Development Goal indicator 1.3.1. Data from https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal (accessed June 2026).

[96] Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.4.1. Data from https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal (accessed June 2026).

[97] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2026/06/women-and-girls-account-for-the-majority-of-laboratory-confirmed-ebola-cases.

[98] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/12/guidance-note-addressing-care-in-times-of-conflict-and-crisis.

[99] See https://reliefweb.int/report/brazil/latin-america-were-not-just-recognizing-care-work-were-rebuilding-economies-around-it.

74 per cent of beneficiaries of vocational training in fields such as construction, transport and technical trades were women. After establishing that only 0.5 per cent of funding for reconstruction in Ukraine had gender equality as a principal objective, the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery raised funding for this purpose. Through a range of projects and initiatives in 2025, UNDP supported 1.2 million women in accessing jobs and improving livelihoods across 45 crisis settings.

52. Efforts to keep, build and sustain peace are increasingly linked to capacity to safely and effectively operate in settings impacted by climate shocks and environmental pressures, including extreme heat, droughts, storms, sea level rise and severe flooding, which intersect with insecurity on multiple levels in already extremely fragile settings. Of the 15 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change, 13 are simultaneously impacted by violent conflict.[100] Displacement and climate-induced resource scarcity are associated with increased risk of child marriage, transactional sex and other forms of gender-based violence, which are often used as harmful coping or survival strategies in situations of severe economic stress and insecurity.[101] Environmental degradation driven by unregulated resource extraction, including mining linked directly to conflict financing, is causing additional and compounding gendered harm, including exposure to toxic contamination, often with consequences for reproductive health, as well as heightened risks of gender-based violence in extractive sites.

53. While awareness of the interlinkages of gender, climate, peace and security has increased, the impacts are not yet adequately reflected in policy and investment frameworks. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in its analysis of nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans across 24 countries, found that only 6 per cent of proposed climate actions mention women. Pregnancy and maternal and child health are notably underrepresented in national and subnational emergency plans for heat extremes and climate crises. In response, the Climate Security Mechanism, the Green Climate Fund, the Peacebuilding Fund, UN-Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund pledged, at the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to promote and support gender-responsive and peace-positive approaches in climate finance, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

54. The Belém gender action plan for 2026–2034[102] adopted at thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties includes, for the first time, language that strengthens safety, protection mechanisms and support for women environmental defenders and women engaged in climate action. This normative instruction is critical at a time when women environmental human rights defenders, grass-roots feminist groups and Indigenous women, including young activists, continue to experience high levels of violence, including murder and disappearance.[103] From 2023 to 2025, environmental and land defenders accounted for close to 3 in 10 of all human rights defenders killed or disappeared, with Indigenous and minority women facing especially acute danger.[104]

55. Justice and accountability are essential to the success of efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace, as reaffirmed in the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its seventieth session.[105] Among the

[100] See https://www.un.org/en/peaceandsecurity/climate-peace-and-security-what-we-need-know.
[101] See https://www.unfpa.org/press/domestic-violence-sub-saharan-africa-will-triple-2060-due-extreme-heat-epidemic-and-stalling.
[102] See FCCC/CP/2025/L.16.
[103] See https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/06/1167647.
[104] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms/human-rights-indicators/sdg-indicators-under-ohchrs-custodianship/human-rights-count.
[105] E/2026/27, chap. I., sect. A.

achievements of the United Nations is its support for the codification and progressive development of international law, and the Organization's efforts to promote the rule of law and justice have yielded historic breakthroughs, including in the pursuit of accountability for conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. Recent developments in international criminal law, including the growing recognition of gender persecution, reproductive violence and other gender-based crimes, further underscore the importance of situating accountability efforts within broader strategies to address structural forms of discrimination and exclusion. In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has identified a pattern of sexual and gender-based violence against women and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression as constituting the crime against humanity of persecution on the basis of gender.[106] In Iraq and Kosovo,[107] reparations authorities continued to approve applications from survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.[108] At the international level, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against two senior Taliban officials for crimes against humanity of gender persecution in July 2025.[109] The Court also issued its first conviction on the grounds of gender-based persecution, on intersecting political, ethnic and gender grounds, in October 2025, in its case against a Janjaweed commander in Darfur.[110] In its judgment of 5 March 2026 in the case of *Ramos Durand et al. v. Peru,* the Inter-American Court of Human Rights recognized forced sterilization as reproductive violence.[111]

56. The United Nations, through a partnership between UN-Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Justice Rapid Response, continued to support human rights investigative bodies with gender expertise, deploying 16 experts to investigations in 2025, enabling commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions to document sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts across the world. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict also assisted national authorities in 10 Member States in 2025. The Gender Justice Platform, a partnership between UN-Women and UNDP, reached more than 1.12 million people across 59 fragile and conflict-affected countries with gender-responsive justice services from 2023 to 2025.

57. Across peacekeeping settings, the United Nations continued to support the advancement of justice. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations enabled women survivors to participate in trials, by coordinating legal aid and promoting victim-centred approaches. In South Sudan, mobile courts expanded accountability in high-risk areas, which contributed to adjudication and convictions of sexual and gender-based violence, alongside enhanced protection and support for victims and witnesses. The establishment of a Special Protection Unit in Bentiu strengthened national capacity to investigate such cases.

58. Women's leadership is essential to a credible transitional justice process. In the Syrian Arab Republic, one third of the members of the National Commission on Transitional Justice are women. In Lebanon, among the members of the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, 40 per cent are women. At the international level, a 2026 report by UN-Women and the GQUAL Campaign found that women remain significantly underrepresented in senior decision-making positions across many international and regional courts, tribunals, bodies and

[106] See https://relatoria.jep.gov.co/searchproviapi/Auto_SRVR-ADHC-03_05-julio-2023.
[107] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
[108] See S/2026/321.
[109] See https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-afghanistan-icc-pre-trial-chamber-ii-issues-arrest-warrants-haibatullah-akhundzada.
[110] See https://www.icc-cpi.int/court-record/icc-02/05-01/20-1240.
[111] See https://jurisprudencia.corteidh.or.cr/en/vid/1099209900.

mechanisms.[112] Gender-balanced institutions are better equipped to deliberate, recognize complex forms of harm and respond credibly to the societies they serve. A 2026 UN-Women report found that, across 22 transitional justice contexts, processes are most effective when they address not only conflict-related violations but also the discriminatory legal and institutional frameworks that enabled or exacerbated those violations.[113]

59. In its resolution 79/122, the General Assembly decided to convene the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity, in 2028 and 2029, to elaborate and conclude a legally binding instrument on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. The negotiations will be based on a compiled text comprising the draft articles adopted by the International Law Commission and proposals for amendments to the articles submitted by Governments. Draft article 2 enumerates, among other acts, enslavement, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, and includes gender among the grounds of persecution.

III. Action to realize women and peace and security commitments

A. Planning for action and monitoring results at the national and regional levels

60. As of May 2026, 117 countries had adopted national action plans on women and peace and security; 80 per cent of these plans have monitoring frameworks with indicators, which is key to tracking progress. However, 15 per cent of countries have plans that have lapsed for at least two years. In 2025, five countries adopted a national action plan for the first time: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Malaysia, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand and Trinidad and Tobago. In several settings the development of regional action plans on women and peace and security have strengthened the impetus for country-level implementation. In Central Asia, for instance, the ongoing development of the first regional action plan,[114] initiated by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, has promoted greater knowledge-sharing and scaling up of good practice across the region.

61. Implementation of these national action plans is hindered by a lack of funding, insufficient political will, gaps in data availability and difficulties in ensuring cross-ministerial alignment, particularly when it comes to security, defence and foreign policy. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, these plans depend heavily on external funding. When crises escalate rapidly, fragmented and rushed responses across sectors and actors also hamper coordination and the integration of gender-related considerations in relief and emergency efforts.

62. However, the cumulative impact of these national action plans has helped to increase the percentage of women in the security and justice sectors, the appointment of women to key decision-making positions and the adoption of new laws and policies that are favourable to gender equality and women's rights. Crucially, the plans can help to generate spaces of interaction and dialogue between women's organizations, peacebuilders and government entities with responsibility for peace and security

[112] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/03/voices-from-the-bench-women-shaping-international-justice.

[113] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/advancing-gender-equality-through-legislative-reform-in-transitional-justice-contexts-en.pdf.

[114] See https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/in-focus/2025/11/regional-hub-for-wps-action-plan-development-for-central-asia.

issues. In some donor countries, such interactions have contributed to greater prioritization of women and peace and security interventions in their development cooperation. For instance, as part of its official development assistance (ODA), Australia reported that all new investments of more than 3 million Australian dollars are required to include gender equality objectives, and expenditure on gender equality increased by 13 per cent in the past year. Slovenia indicated that it had doubled the share of programmable bilateral development assistance that includes a gender perspective. Denmark reported that it systematically tracks and documents these efforts through its grant management system for development assistance.

63. Other positive examples go beyond funding. Ireland mobilized assistance in order to help women human rights defenders at risk in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to relocate to safety in Kinshasa. Germany has made women's participation a requirement for its financial support to third-party mediation, and the majority of the members of the peace mediation team in the Federal Foreign Office are now women. Women are also a majority of personnel deployed for Finland's civilian crisis management tasks. Countries such as Brazil and Uruguay appointed women as guarantors of peace talks in Colombia between the Government and different armed groups. In Somalia, the Jubbaland State of Somalia criminalized female genital mutilation in 2025, following the example set by Galmudug a year earlier. Every new Security and Defence Partnership signed by the European Union in 2025 and early 2026 integrated women and peace and security considerations, and the percentage of external actions with gender equality as a principal or significant objective rose from 64 to 82 per cent between 2019 and 2024. The regional bloc responded to calls for greater financing for women's rights organizations by more than tripling its support over the past three years.

64. Investments at the local level can yield strong dividends and localization efforts have gained salience in both peace and security efforts and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines recently adopted an executive order mandating the integration of women and peace and security programmes into the respective development plans and budgets of the ministries and agencies in the region. In the Karamoja Region in Uganda, women's representation in district and sub-county peace committees has nearly tripled, from 17 per cent in 2022 to 46 per cent in 2025, marking a major shift in women's roles in cross-border security. At the time of writing, 21 districts in Uganda have local action plans on women and peace and security, and these districts are now incorporating these activities into their development plans, into agreements with external partners, and in some cases, committing 1 per cent of their local budgets to their implementation. By early 2025, Kenya had 19 action plans on women and peace and security at the county level. In these counties, a decline in local conflicts over water and other resources was observed. In Ukraine, 34 women's self-help groups across different communities became key actors in local recovery processes, using updated community gender profiles to develop detailed recommendations that were actively used by local authorities. In Kosovo, local plans in 17 municipalities have strengthened gender-responsive budgeting. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, localized implementation has focused on harmonizing support services for internally displaced women and returning populations in Sinjar.

65. Apart from marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), there were many other opportunities for countries and regional organizations to demonstrate their support for this agenda. At least five countries with feminist foreign policies abandoned them after changes in government between 2022 and 2025, but the overall number of countries considering such a policy framework continues to grow. A total of 19 countries are now members of the Feminist

Foreign Policy Plus Group.[115] In July 2025, in the Declaration adopted at the seventeenth BRICS Summit, leaders reiterated their commitment to the full implementation and advancement of the women and peace and security agenda, and the importance of ensuring the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels of peace and security processes. At the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial hosted in Berlin in 2025, a significant majority of Member States making pledges of support to United Nations peacekeeping expressed their commitment to gender-responsive peacekeeping, including women's participation. The Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, the largest global network of its kind, now has 110 countries and regional organizations, compared to 45 a decade ago, when it started. The network was co-chaired by Japan and Norway in 2025, and by Italy and the Philippines in 2026, and its communiqués, agreed by consensus by all members, are submitted to the Security Council and the General Assembly.[116] The combined interventions of the signatories of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action reached 27.5 million women and girls globally in 2025. This multi-stakeholder coalition, chaired by Namibia, had 242 signatories in 2025, more than double when it started in 2021.

66. Through these coalitions and intergovernmental forums, as well as in the meetings of the Security Council on women and peace and security, Member States share their progress and challenges in implementing this agenda and collaborate and hold each other accountable. This is also the case in the human rights system, especially after the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women issued its general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and reinforced it with its general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. In 2025, the Committee issued concluding observations on reports submitted by 18 countries, and nearly all observations included sections and recommendations on women and peace and security. In July 2026, in a first for an intergovernmental outcome negotiated at the United Nations, the Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution that explicitly names reproductive violence as a distinct category of gender-based violence.[117]

B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations

67. Almost 10 years ago, the Secretary-General began his first term of office vowing to make the United Nations a model for other actors working on peace and security, starting with committing to achieving gender parity in the Organization and strengthening the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. These directives were followed by many others, including on women's representation in peace processes led by the United Nations and support for quotas and temporary special measures, on earmarked funding for gender equality as a principal objective and for women-led organizations in conflict-affected countries, on enhanced measures to protect women human rights defenders at immediate risk, and the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. The United Nations system was asked to review its public messaging, expenditure, operational and strategic frameworks, accountability tools, internal analysis, engagement with women's organizations and technical capacity and expertise to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

[115] Cross-regional group of Member States committed to advancing feminist foreign policies, established in 2021 and co-chaired in 2025 by Colombia and France.

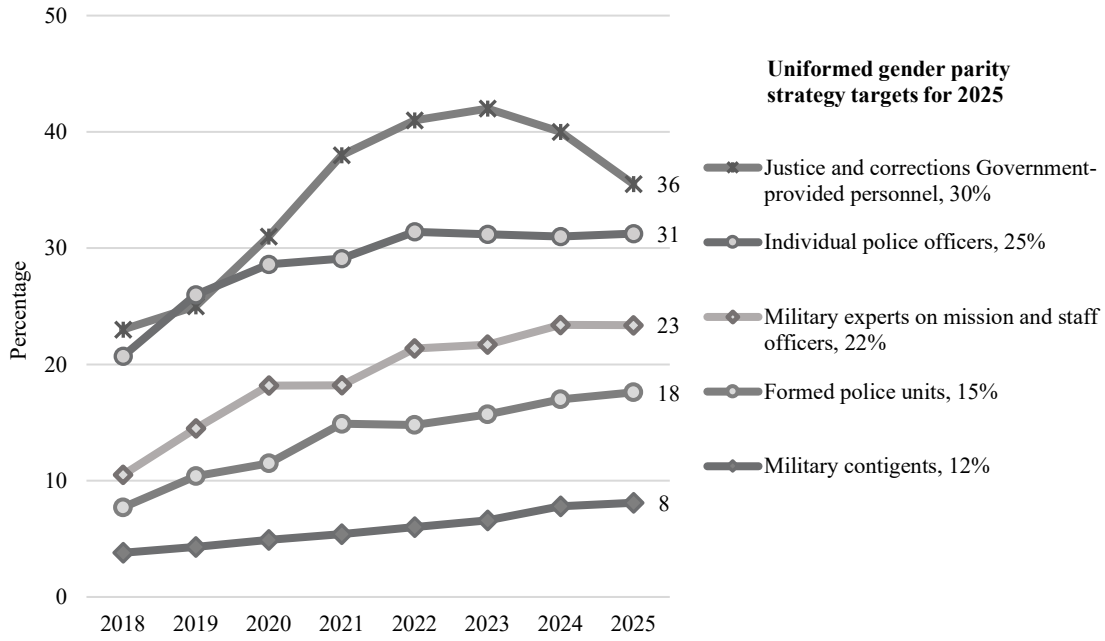
[116] For the most recent communiqué, see A/80/827-S/2026/741.

[117] See Human Rights Council resolution 62/18 (adopted on 7 July 2026).

68. In that time, there have been examples of change. For the first time in history, the organization reached parity among its high-level officials in 2020, compared to 30 per cent women a decade ago. Greater gender balance among peacekeeping personnel and leadership improves mandate delivery, but gains are fragile. Among heads and deputy heads of United Nations missions, parity was first achieved in 2021 but has decreased to 33 per cent. In 2025, women headed two of the three largest peacekeeping missions, as well as one of the four military-led missions. All the targets for 2025 of the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028 have been met, except for the representation of women among military contingents, which stands at 8.1 per cent, short of the 12 per cent target but was a net increase compared to 3.8 per cent when the Strategy was launched in 2018 (see figure III). However, this category is the largest among uniformed military personnel, by a wide margin.

Figure III

Proportion of women in military and police personnel by types of positions, and justice and corrections government-provided personnel in United Nations peace operations, 2018–2025



Source: Department of Peace Operations (data retrieved April 2026).
Note: Data reflect annual averages.

69. The sustained efforts to reach parity and build enabling environments have supported peacekeeping mandate delivery and effectiveness thanks to various initiatives. Last October, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations launched its fourth programming round. The Fund has supported 22 security institutions in 19 troop- and police-contributing countries and three United Nations peacekeeping missions. Such projects include, for example, the provision of portable sanitation facilities to enable women's participation in long distance patrols in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. More than 1,300 uniformed women have joined the network for uniformed women peacekeepers launched by the Department of Peace Operations in 2023. Among civilian staff, the percentage of women among United Nations Volunteers increased to over 46 per cent on average in peacekeeping and special political missions in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

70. In peacekeeping, these efforts extended well beyond efforts to increase the recruitment of women. The Action for Peacekeeping initiative (2018) and its successor, Action for Peacekeeping Plus, positioned the women and peace and security agenda as a catalyst for effective peacekeeping and sustaining peace. This commitment supports women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes, including their meaningful engagement in safety and security, improved access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence, and protection of women human rights defenders at risk.

71. While women's direct participation in peace talks and decision-making remains low, United Nations entities have also devoted efforts to improving the gender balance in other sectors relevant to peace and security, from justice and security actors to demining efforts and other endeavours, collaborating with Member States to build up towards targets that were rare or did not exist only a few years ago. For example, in border units supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the proportion of women officers increased from 11 per cent in 2025 to 30 per cent in 2026, with women now accounting for nearly one third of leadership positions. At borders and transit points, this can result in more effective screening, improved intelligence and strengthened identification and referral of victims of trafficking. These efforts are replicated across many areas of the United Nations work. Last year in the Sudan, with the support of UNDP, implementation of a 40 per cent quota for women across 23 community management committees and 54 water user associations propelled 616 women into formal decision-making roles through which they could influence local governance, resource distribution and conflict mediation.

72. More United Nations entities have been setting and using gender equality markers and tracking, tagging and reporting gender-related expenditures more systematically, which is a point of emphasis in the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, a flagship initiative launched in 2024. Among other things, this plan calls for 15 per cent to be established as the standard allocation for expenditure in the United Nations system dedicated to outputs with gender equality as a principal objective by 2026. All programme and fundraising units, across entities, that have not yet reached this level have been requested to put in place plans to reach that target by 2030. The Acceleration Plan also recommends that all new multi-partner trust funds establish a 40 per cent target for gender equality programming and coordination. In 2025, the number of United Nations country teams applying the gender equality marker in their joint workplans increased to 113, up from 79 three years earlier.[118] Among them, 19 per cent allocated 15 per cent or more of the available resources under their annual funding frameworks to activities with gender equality as the principal objective. The current situation shows improvements in the use of tracking systems and availability of data, but generally low levels of actual spending and still work to do to reach 15 per cent across the board.

73. Last year, 38 per cent of United Nations entities provided direct funding to local women's organizations in peace and humanitarian contexts, compared to 25 per cent in 2024. Even in the most difficult circumstances, the United Nations has shown that it can adjust its working modalities to ensure that women's organizations continue to operate. In Afghanistan, for example, UN-Women provided technical and financial support to 191 grass-roots women-led organizations last year. A new United Nations-wide Funding Framework for Women's Organizations and Civil Society Organizations has been developed to harmonize approaches across different entities.[119] In the past four years, several United Nations agencies and peace

[118] Data from UNInfo, available at https://www.uninfo.org/ (accessed April 2026).

[119] See https://untf.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/02/preliminary-analysis-of-united-nations-system-approaches-to-resourcing-womens-organizations-and-civil-society-organizations.

operations have been taking targeted actions to support women human rights defenders at risk in conflict-affected countries, particularly those who face reprisals for their cooperation with the United Nations. This includes: (a) public statements and quiet diplomacy on attacks or intimidation of particular individuals or organizations, raising awareness of their situation at the level of national and international stakeholders; (b) visiting women human rights defenders at risk or in detention and advocating for their freedom, amplifying their message and providing space and political legitimacy for their activities, as well as providing direct protection and resources for relocation; and (c) monitoring hate speech and misinformation, including collaborating with private companies to track and take down content on social media. In October 2025, the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General endorsed six priority actions to strengthen inter-agency coordination and the involvement of senior leadership in cases of reprisals, including the designation of country-level coordination mechanisms and focal points and the development of joint programming. More than 120 United Nations country teams have already designated focal points and an initial mapping has identified at least 35 coordination mechanisms that can be leveraged for this purpose. The Secretary-General follows up on the implementation of these directives in annual meetings with the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women and through separate updates on women and peace and security by all his Special Representatives and Special Envoys.

74. In humanitarian settings, United Nations entities have been making greater use of gender analysis and sex- and age-disaggregated data, tailoring humanitarian aid more specifically to support women-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, or adolescent girls. In 2024, 82 per cent of humanitarian response plans included provisions to address gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and women's economic recovery, compared to only 54 per cent in 2020. United Nations entities have also increased their efforts to include local women's organizations in humanitarian country teams, set up advisory groups to ensure their sustained input, and increase funding for women-led organizations from country-based pooled funds. Nearly 90 per cent of these pooled funds include women's organizations as members, and their funding to women-led organizations grew from 8 per cent in 2023, to 12 per cent in 2024 and 17 per cent in 2025.

75. However, some of these positive changes are at risk due to the impact of the funding cuts, alongside the closing of national women's organizations and specialized services and programmes for women and girls. Data from the third iteration of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women shows 42 per cent of United Nations entities reporting actual or anticipated weakening of their gender architecture in 2025–2026.

76. Contingency measures and a hiring freeze imposed to address the Organization's liquidity crisis have been felt acutely in peace operations, contributing to a reduction in dedicated gender expertise. Other specialized capacities have also declined, including the number of military gender advisers and women's protection advisers working to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

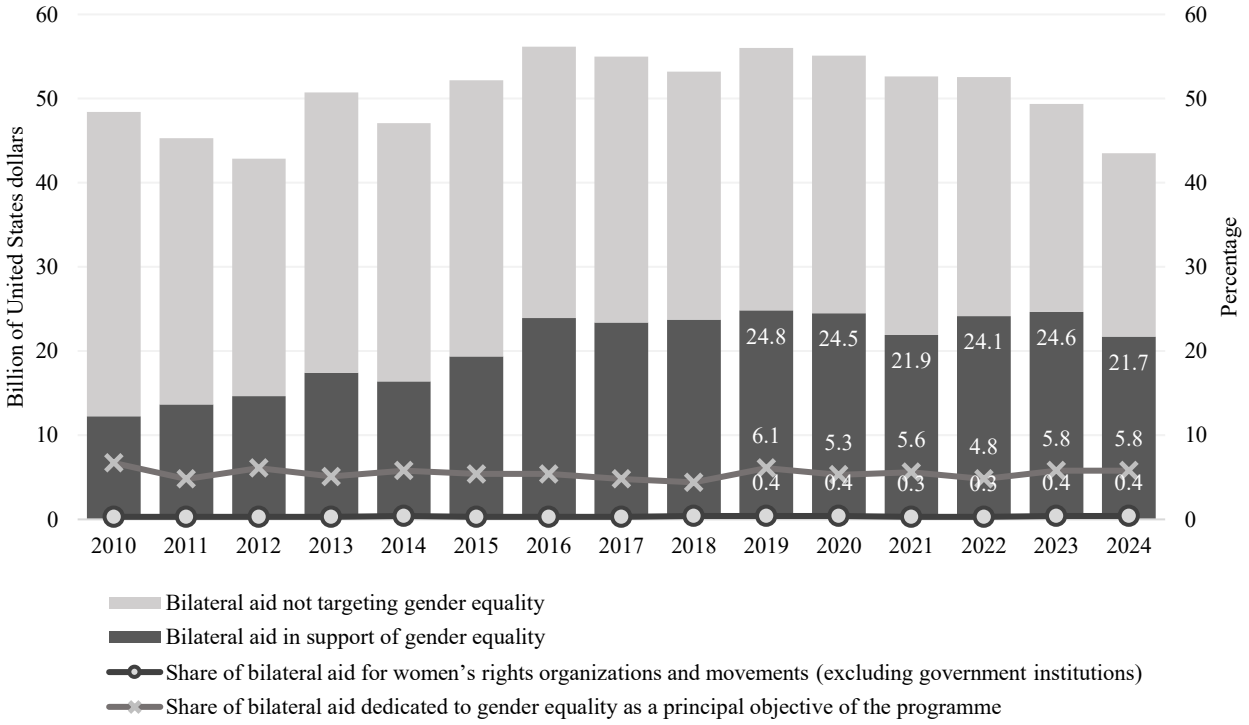
C. Financing for women and peace and security

77. This year's report shows a deepening of negative financing trends in the area of women and peace and security, as previously reported. There are big gaps to close, including the $4 trillion annual gap needed to reach the Sustainable Development

Goals, which requires a reworking of global financial rules and tackling unsustainable debt burdens.[120]

78. The latest available data on ODA show that bilateral aid to contexts with high and extreme fragility[121] amounted to $43.5 billion in 2024. This marked the fifth consecutive annual decline since 2019. Of this amount, $21.7 billion (50.8 per cent) supported gender equality, falling by 12 per cent (see figure IV). However, only $2.5 billion (5.8 per cent) was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective.[122]

Figure IV
Bilateral allocable aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in contexts with high and extreme fragility, 2010–2024



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System database (accessed 1 May 2026).
Note: Bilateral aid from Development Assistance Committee members.

79. Preliminary 2025 data indicate a further decline in ODA, with Development Assistance Committee members and associates providing $174.3 billion, 23.1 per cent less than in 2024 – the largest annual drop in the history of ODA.[123] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projections indicate that several sectors receiving ODA with gender equality objectives are at particularly high risk of funding reductions.[124] In 2025, aid for population matters and sexual and reproductive health was projected to decline by 35 to 53 per cent, and funding for programmes aimed at ending violence against women and girls was expected to decrease by 17 to

[120] General Assembly resolution 79/323.
[121] OECD, *States of Fragility 2025* (Paris, 2025).
[122] OECD, "Handbook on the OECD DAC gender equality policy marker", 2 October 2025.
[123] See https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2026/04/a-historic-decline-in-foreign-aid-preliminary-2025-oda-data.html.
[124] See https://www.oecd.org/en/blogs/2026/03/oda-for-gender-equality-is-plummeting--How-can-we-protect-it.html.

20 per cent. This was largely the result of a few top donors drastically cutting contributions. Core contributions to the United Nations and humanitarian ODA experienced sharp declines. On a more encouraging note, eight Development Assistance Committee members increased their ODA,[125] some non-DAC members sustained their engagement, and some donors introduced new measures in support of women's organizations. Nevertheless, the outlook remains concerning. Current projections by OECD suggest a further 6.9 per cent drop in Development Assistance Committee countries' net ODA in 2026, even before accounting for additional strain due to the crisis in the Middle East.[126]

80. Domestic public spending plays a central role in advancing global goals, including gender equality and the realization of the women and peace and security agenda, yet few countries systematically track such investments. Worldwide, only one quarter of the 131 countries with available data between 2021 and 2025 have systems to track resource allocations for gender equality.[127] In many contexts, progress on women and peace and security priorities largely remains reliant on external assistance and project funding that tends to be short term and smaller scale. Predictable, flexible and sustained financing that covers core costs and movement-building support must remain a prioritized goal.

81. Last year's report (S/2025/556) brought attention to the severe impact of funding cuts on women's organizations on the front lines of conflict and crisis, with many approaching a breaking point. The latest data indicate that the situation has not improved. ODA supporting women's rights organizations and women's movements in contexts of high and extreme fragility declined from $215.4 million in 2023 to $167.9 million in 2024,[128] while its share of total bilateral aid remains stagnant at 0.4 per cent – still below the 1 per cent target recommended by the United Nations.[129] Canada and Ireland reported that they have exceeded the 1 per cent target, and notably, Canada's target is set at 4.8 per cent.

82. A 2026 UN-Women report[130] on the impact of aid cuts on women's organizations in humanitarian settings finds that the women and girls left behind first are those with the fewest alternatives: women and girls in remote, conflict-affected and hard-to-reach communities. Nearly two thirds, or 63 per cent, of organizations have already cut services in those areas. In follow-up to last year's survey, 61 per cent of organizations surveyed are in a worse financial situation than in 2025, 45 per cent have less than six months of funding and 77 per cent have lost staff. Findings like these are echoed in other recent reports[131] and have immediate impacts on people's lives. For example, women's rights and women-led organizations in Ukraine warned that they will be forced to stop life-saving services to at least 63,000 women and girls in need in 2026.[132]

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[125] Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

[126] See https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2026/04/a-historic-decline-in-foreign-aid-preliminary-2025-oda-data.html; and https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oda-projections-for-2026-and-the-near-term_d7c74fa2-en/full-report.html#a1zOEC25.

[127] Sustainable Development Goal Global Database indicator 5.c.2.

[128] The amount excludes bilateral aid to government institutions.

[129] See S/2023/725; S/2025/556; and United Nations, "Our Common Agenda policy brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace" (A/77/CRP.1/Add.8), action 5.

[130] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/07/beyond-the-breaking-point-the-continuing-impact-of-funding-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-settings.

[131] See https://f1d81e51-1dc7-47e9-a206-da15cc54909e.filesusr.com/ugd/5680cd_a0d0f94929454710996208cb6fa73de5.pdf. See also https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/research-resources/at-what-cost-women-led-organizations-funding-cuts-and-the-price-of-survival/.

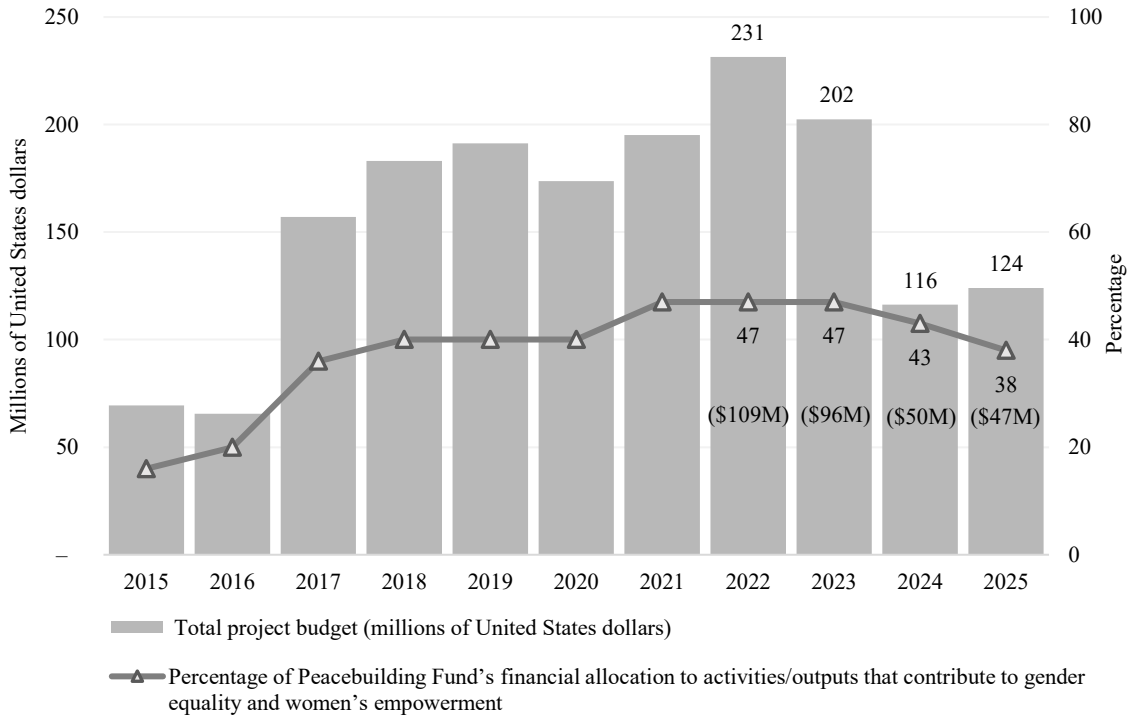
[132] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/02/the-impact-of-foreign-assistance-cuts-on-womens-rights-and-women-led-organizations-in-ukraine.

83. In 2025, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund raised $30.4 million for local women's organizations and activists on the front lines. This is a significant decrease from $65.9 million in the previous year and a return to 2022 levels. Reversing these trends must be a priority. The impact of dedicated funds and direct, flexible and sustained funding for women's organizations has been well documented. Since its establishment in 2016, the Fund has mobilized more than $276 million and supported over 1,800 local women's organizations and 1,251 women human rights defenders across 49 crisis-affected countries.

84. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, the largest multi-partner trust fund dedicated to supporting peace efforts and transitions, has also been affected by the cuts. In 2025, the Fund approved $124 million for initiatives in 28 countries, allocating over 38 per cent ($47 million) to gender equality (see figure V). This marks the third consecutive year of decline in both the volume and share of gender-focused funding.

Figure V

Peacebuilding Fund funds allocated to projects promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, 2015–2025



Source: Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (accessed April 2026).

85. In 2025, humanitarian funding saw its greatest contraction in a decade, with funding dropping below 2016 levels amid rising needs. The dramatic reduction in funding forced humanitarian organizations to severely reduce delivery to people in crisis – shutting down programmes, closing offices and laying off thousands of staff.[133] In 2026, humanitarians will aim to collectively assist 135 million people, out of 239 million people in need.[134] As of June 2026, only 26 per cent of required funding

[133] See https://humanitarianaction.info/article/under-fire-and-under-pressure-what-happens-when-humanitarian-action-hindered.

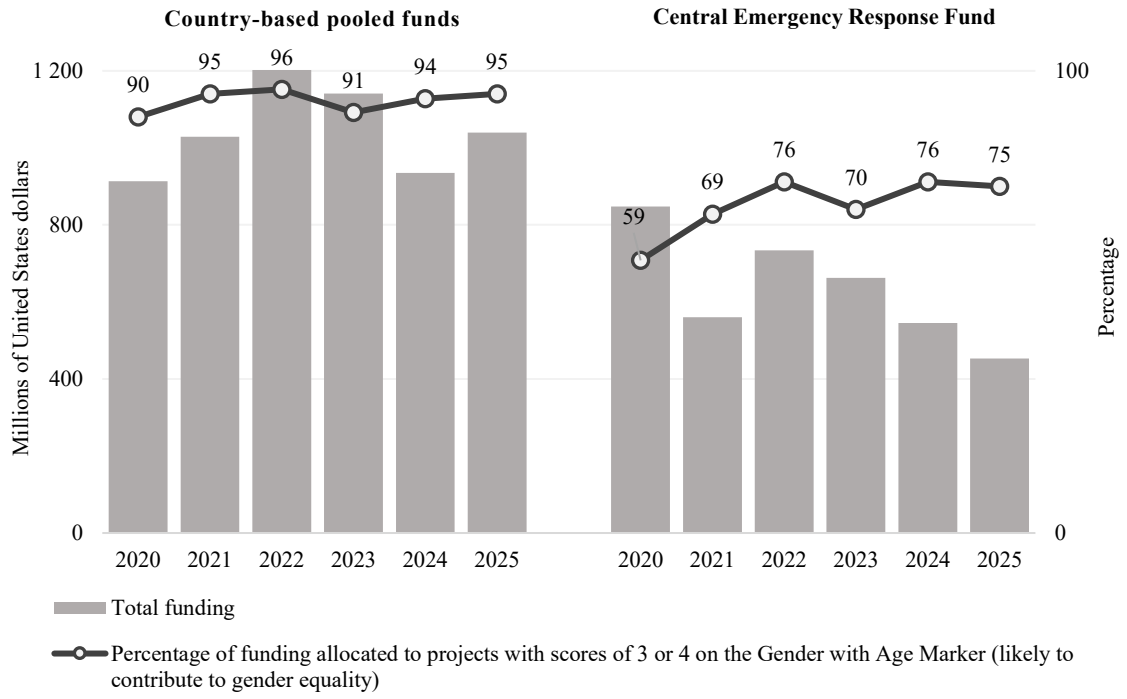
[134] See https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2026-enaresfr.

had been reached.[135] Several sectors continue to face funding shortfalls. For instance, 83 per cent of the funding required for gender-based violence prevention and response in humanitarian emergencies remained unmet.[136] Significant funding gaps also persisted in food security (76 per cent unmet) and health (68 per cent unmet). In several settings, reductions in legal aid, protection monitoring and documentation services have left displaced women at greater risk of refoulement, statelessness and exploitation. In Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp, the decline in funding has reduced the availability of safe spaces, gender-based violence case management and psychosocial support to Rohingya refugees. In Chad, one social worker supported 112 survivors at a time, far above the recommended maximum of 20.

86. The Gender with Age Marker continued to guide funding allocations across all country-based pooled funds managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund. In 2025, the country-based pooled funds allocated $983.6 million (95 per cent of total funding) and the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated $204 million (75 per cent of total funding) to projects that contributed to gender equality across age groups. However, the Central Emergency Response Fund had fallen to its lowest funding level in a decade (see figure VI).

Figure VI

Funding allocated by country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund to projects that contribute to gender equality, as measured by the Gender with Age Marker, 2020–2025



Source: Data from the country-based pooled funds database (https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/#gam_heading) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (accessed June 2026).

[135] See https://fts.unocha.org/home/2026/plans (accessed June 2026).
[136] Ibid.

87. The world stands at a crossroads; the budget and financing decisions that Member States, international financial institutions and other actors take in the lead-up to 2030 are of historic importance. The path taken will decide whether countries will move closer to or farther away from realizing global norms and commitments.

IV. Work of the Security Council

88. In 2025, 46 per cent of the decisions adopted by the Security Council included references to gender-related issues, a significant decrease compared to 65 per cent on average over the previous decade and the lowest percentage since 2008. This reflected higher levels of division in the Security Council on these matters, including on long-established terminology. In presidential statements, which require the support of all Council members, the share that included references to gender-related issues plummeted from 85.7 per cent in 2024 to 12.5 per cent in 2025.

89. Even within these constraints, the Security Council continued to give strong instructions on matters relating to women and peace and security to most peacekeeping missions and sanctions committees and urged the deployment of gender advisers and women's protection advisers. For example, the Security Council demanded women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the peace process in Yemen; made explicit references to quotas for women's representation in several contexts, including South Sudan and the Central African Republic; called upon the Taliban to swiftly reverse all policies and practices restricting women and girls' rights and the ban on Afghan women working for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations and accessing United Nations premises; and strongly encouraged all parties in Libya to create a safe and enabling environment for members of civil society, emphasizing the need to protect women, women's rights organizations and women peacebuilders from intimidation, threats, reprisals and attacks. In early 2026, the Security Council sanctioned five leaders of the Rapid Support Forces in the Sudan, and three of them for their explicit role in the widespread acts of sexual violence attributed to this armed group, among other violations. These decisions benefited from the analysis and information shared periodically at the meetings of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, co-chaired by Denmark and Sierra Leone in 2025.

90. A majority of Council members, made up of nine signatories of the statement of shared commitments for the principles of women, peace and security coordinated by Slovenia in 2025, delivered 11 joint statements throughout the year.[137] As the Security Council convened to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), these nine Council members joined the Secretary-General's call for women to constitute at least one third of all participants in United Nations-led or co-led processes; called for all donors to adopt a 15 per cent minimum funding target for gender equality as a core objective in their ODA, humanitarian aid, post-conflict reconstruction, transitional justice and counter-terrorism funding; committed to end impunity for reproductive violence and to protect and support women human rights defenders; and called for access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

91. And yet, in some of the most entrenched conflicts, from Ukraine to the Sudan, from Myanmar to the situation in the Middle East, the Security Council rarely addressed women and peace and security issues, including the lack of women's meaningful participation in diplomatic efforts to end these conflicts. According to analysis by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, while 26 per

[137] See S/2025/855.

cent of the briefings to the Council by senior United Nations officials on specific countries or regions mentioned women's participation and leadership in peace and political processes, only 8 per cent provided specific data on this matter, and mostly on women in politics, rather than in peace and security processes.[138]

92. In 2025, the percentages of women participating in Council meetings under rule 39 and women who are members of panels or groups of experts assisting sanctions committees both decreased slightly, to 43 per cent and 41 per cent respectively, although these are still much higher than only a decade ago. However, the number of briefings by women from civil society organizations dropped to 31, compared to 55 in 2024 and the lowest yearly total since 2020.[139] Both the number and percentage of these briefers who self-reported reprisals against them decreased compared with the previous three years, based on responses to the annual UN-Women survey on this matter. It is critical that independent and diverse women representing civil society continue to inform the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

93. This report describes a year in which more armed conflicts were recorded than in any year since this Organization was founded, and in which women were absent from the negotiating table in four of every five peace processes. The United Nations has been tested in each of its 80 years and will be tested again. But the idea that peace built without women does not hold, is not a notion of a single diplomatic era. It has outlasted backlash before. It will outlast this one, and the next.

94. The Security Council bears primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. Without a Security Council fit for purpose, the world is in grave danger. Where the Council's decisions are silent on gender equality and the rights of women and girls, that silence carries through into mission mandates, into the instructions given to parties to conflict, and into the protection available to civilians. This framework is the Council's own creation. I urge its members to apply it consistently in every decision they take.

95. While taking note of the debates on agreed gender-related terminology and normative frameworks, these should not divert attention from the imperative that women's meaningful participation in resolving conflict is crucial, that the protection of civilians, including women and girls, during armed conflict is a central tenet of international humanitarian law, and that those who kill, rape or persecute them shall be sanctioned and held accountable.

96. Over the past decade, as Secretary-General, I have set targets for this organization. Every peace process led or co-led by the United Nations should meet the minimum one third target for women's participation, with parity as the goal. All new multi-partner trust funds should establish a 40 per cent target for gender equality programming and coordination. And every United Nations country team should meet the minimum financing target, establish a coordination mechanism for the protection of women human rights defenders, and promote temporary special measures for women's participation in politics, national dialogues and processes related to peace, security and justice

97. Commitments will not be met if the capacity to meet them continues to be dismantled. The effective implementation of the women and peace and security

[138] See https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/wps-senior-official-briefings-2025/.

[139] See https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/women-civil-society-security-council-september-december-2025/.

agenda depends on sustained institutional capacity, resources and partnerships. The Organization has invested over many years in building the expertise, the networks and the guidance that underpin this work. I regret that the growing capacity constraints due to funding reductions risk eroding these foundations that enable the United Nations to deliver for all women and girls, and reversing the hard-won gains. I call upon Member States to continue supporting both the agenda and the capacities that make its realization possible.

98. The United Nations will continue to stand with Member States to deliver for all women and girls. As I complete 10 years at the helm of this organization, and as I stated in the Gender Equality Clarion Call,[140] the United Nations system must lead the world humbly and boldly towards gender equality, as a human rights issue and as a central prerequisite to peace and security and sustainable development. The United Nations will continue to uphold these principles, including in times of backlash and financial constraint, because the alternative is the risk of a dismantling of the multilateral and human rights framework we have collectively built. That cost would be paid, as it always is, first by women and girls in the places where the world is not watching.

99. But this agenda cannot be delivered by one entity, or by the United Nations system alone. Ultimately, it requires the political will, courage and action of all Member States. That is why I have asked every member of OECD to earmark at least 15 per cent of official development assistance to conflict-affected countries for gender equality as a principal objective, including at least 1 per cent for women's organizations working in these settings. And every signatory to my Common Pledge to Increase Women's Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes should apply the one third minimum target for the participation of women in the peace negotiations they are involved in.

100. Beyond aiming to achieve those percentages, I ask Member States to not allow international law to be trampled upon. That means upholding women's right to full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in peace and security processes. It means humanitarian action governed by principle, by non-discrimination and by the participation of women and girls. It means holding accountable every perpetrator of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, gender persecution and reproductive violence. Justice for women and girls must be a cornerstone of the world we seek to build.

101. Governments must respect and protect the human rights of every woman and girl, including their rights to sexual and reproductive health. They must consistently demonstrate a zero-tolerance approach to any form of attack, retaliation or reprisals against women in all their diversity for their political participation, human rights, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian work, or cooperation with the United Nations.

102. The world is spending far more on waging war than on building peace. Last year, global military expenditure reached $2.9 trillion and rose for the eleventh consecutive year. Redirecting even a fraction of that sum to preventing conflict, to women's economic security and social protection and to the women-led peace efforts that are unfunded, despite their proven effectiveness as shown in this report, would close vital gaps.

[140] See https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2025/03/gender_equality_clarion_call.pdf.