




## “Women Must Be Involved In Every Aspect Of Peace Process”

Dr. Anne-Marie Goetz

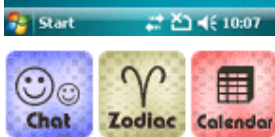
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Dr. Anne-Marie Goetz is the Chief Advisor for Governance, Peace and Security, UNIFEM. She was recently in Kathmandu to take stock of the situation here particularly in reference with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which binds member states to ensure women involvement in peace process, among others. She spoke to SANJAYA DHAKAL of Nepalnews on the state of implementation of the SCR 1325 in the country. Excerpts:

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How is the SCR 1325 relevant to Nepal?



It is relevant to all countries in conflict, and those emerging from conflict. Nepal is in a very exciting phase resolving a longstanding civil conflict as well as moving towards deepening democracy. In any such context, women's previous exclusion and prospects for engagement are critical. In Nepal's context, even as the country is rich in women's civil society movement, there are actually very few women at top level. Therefore, women have not had chance to bring their concerns to public debate. Women in Nepal were affected by conflict quite severely. Women have been subjected to direct violence, often sexual violence; as have their children. Some have been displaced; their property rights have been abused. These things have happened to men as well but women have not been involved in efforts to resolve these conflicts. There was no woman in peace accord discussion. The women have not had a chance to resolve these problems. That is why SCR 1325 is so important to Nepal because this resolution binds the government of Nepal to respect Security Council agreement that women are relevant to and must be included in peace negotiation, post conflict governance, humanitarian response and post conflict reconstruction. Women must be

involved in every aspect of peace process.

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### How do you find Nepal government's implementation of the resolution?

To tell you what I have seen, the electoral bill, and provisions of quotas in Constituent Assembly are highly progressive. They show willingness to ensure women's participation as candidates, as voters and, hopefully, as elected representatives. Those elements show that there is a political willingness to engage women and to see women engaged. Other things like the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission and district peace committees also similarly show the political willingness. This demonstrates Nepali government takes women's participation seriously. However, society is often slow to change. It is one thing making rules and laws, its another thing for political parties to field the correct number of candidates, and its another thing to meaningfully involve women in peace negotiation. So there is a lot to be done. If the government is seriously committed to this issue, it has to do a lot more than write bills and resolutions. It has to ensure safety, adequate policing and, at some point, they may need to announce measures against parties that don't comply with quota provisions.

### What hopes does SCR 1325 hold for suffering women?

At one level, it may just be a piece of paper for them. At another level, it should be a piece of paper they can invoke or that they can refer to, to say that their situation is not adequate and demand better response. The SCR 1325 is very explicit about humanitarian situation such as Internally Displaced Persons' camps. The government and the international community must do everything they can to protect women in the camps. The resolution is also very explicit about situation of women in cantonments or those associated with fighting forces. They deserve respectful treatment and they also deserve the same access to resources like men.

### What are the consequences for member states that do not comply with the SCR 1325?

To put it bluntly, there are very few consequences for non-implementation. I consider this to be a shortcoming. And my own job at UNIFEM is to seek to improve accountability mechanism so that there are consequences.

### What is the role and responsibility of UN agency like UNMIN to ensure the implementation of SCR here?

As far as UNMIN is concerned, reporting is mandatory for them and reporting on gender issue is encouraged. The first thing UNMIN should do is, since it has offices to do so, it should analyze the political and security situation and its staff members should be attuned to women's experience of political and security problems. And those women's experiences are relevant to report, especially as in the case of recent violence (in Kapilvastu) where women did suffer a particular form of attack – the sexual attack. This should be of grave concern to the

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government as well as the UN system. On the issue of what UNMIN should do to implement the 1325, I can say that it should do a lot. It has gender unit and gender advisor. The UNMIN is actually doing a lot in the sense that it is setting up the necessary structures to respond to women's needs. About half of UNMIN staff, I believe, is here for electoral assistance. They have the obligation to make sure that women are treated equally. There is so much to do like ensuring polling stations are safe for them; making them aware; making sure that voters' education reaches them; making sure that election code of conduct are respectful of women and so on. On the other hand, in relation to the process of separation of arms, UNMIN should definitely ensure that women ex combatants and women associated with the fighting force are included in any process of integration or other agreements. I am sure they will do that since they have a strong guideline. In relation to transitional justice, I think OHCHR will be more responsible to ensure that women get proper attention.

#### **We see governments and parties paying only lip-service to women's issues. What do you say?**

Despite showing political willingness and commitment to include women, when it comes to forming committees or filing candidate sheets, often decision makers claim that they did not find enough suitable women. This can be disingenuous and this can be a denial of candidates that are there. This can also be a failure to recognize talent. But also the women's movement has the responsibility to provide a list of qualified women to decision makers so they cannot use that excuse.

#### **Do you have to be a woman to represent woman's views and concerns?**

Of course, not. What matters is not so much quantity but the quality of leadership. I must say quantity is important in a situation where historically there have been so few women in public office. Quantity is very important when the lack of women in public space makes women think that they have nothing to do with politics. Many studies have shown that if you have at least 30 percent women in office, they will feel confident in representing women's issues. Quantity is important for democratic justice.

#### **In South Asia we have seen women become presidents, prime ministers and senior leaders. But still the situation of women in the region has not improved. Why?**

This illustrates that it is not the gender identity of the politician that necessarily shapes their interest, - its party politics. In South Asian countries - like in many countries - women's interests have never driven the party policy. Women are just emerging as political force in many parts of the world. As women develop more political leaders, they are going to be able to shape party politics.

#### **Even in the UN system, we do not find many women in leading positions as much as we would have expected. Any comment?**

I am also very surprised with this situation.

#### **How do you find the women's movement in Nepal?**

Nepal is well known for its strength of women's organizations and their diversity. They have been involved in development and political movements. I respect their role. But one gets the impression as an outsider that there may be a sense of a lack of confidence as what can be achieved through state. I hope I am not misrepresenting. I feel this is a good moment for women in civil society to review that and focus on governance reforms and democratization. They should focus their energy to achieve inclusive, democratic and peaceful country. -

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