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Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022 and the Ottawa Treaty

Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022 for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security was launched on November 1, 2017. The National Action Plan (CNAP) outlines how Canada will advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda over the next five years.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda covers a wide variety of issues including work on disarmament. When it comes to disarmament the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines is at the forefront of most discussions in Canada especially with the 20th anniversary of the Treaty's signing coming a month after the launch of the CNAP. The WPS global agenda and the CNAP in particular are closely linked to efforts to implement the Ottawa Treaty.

Mines Action Canada was pleased to see "Take gender-responsive approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, to transitional justice and reconciliation, to small arms and light weapons, to **mine action**, and to human trafficking" (**emphasis added**) was listed as an action under the heading of Programming in the CNAP's Theory of Change. Mine action is an umbrella term for the activities required to implement the Ottawa Treaty: landmine clearance, victim assistance, research and advocacy, stockpile destruction, and risk education. The inclusion of mine action in the CNAP's actions is crucially important as mine action, the Ottawa Treaty and the global landmine problem are relevant in differing degrees to the five objectives set out in the CNAP.

In this paper, we will explore the links between mine action, Canada's obligations under the Ottawa Treaty and the five objectives in the CNAP. In the annex, some of the targets and goals set out by Global Affairs Canada will be assessed in more detail.

Increase the meaningful participation of women, women's organizations and networks in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding

The Ottawa Treaty provides an excellent example of the results of increasing meaningful participation of women, women's organizations and networks in peace and security work. The 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a driving force behind the negotiation and the ongoing implementation of the Ottawa Treaty, has always been a women-led movement. In the ICBL women lead at the national and international levels.

One way the ICBL increases the meaningful participation of women in disarmament, peace and security, is through small grants. The ICBL like other international disarmament campaigns and networks issue small grants to grassroots organizations to support their work. These small grants provide much needed funding directly to women-led organizations, often working at the intersection of disarmament, disability rights and women's rights. These organizations are usually too small to be noticed in donor state capitals or to be able to receive funding directly from states. Through grants from the international

campaigns they can receive visibility and funding at a scale that is manageable yet significantly enhances their effectiveness.

Research shows that women still make up less than a quarter of delegates to disarmament forums at the international level.¹ Civil society tends to have more diverse representation at disarmament forums. Civil society organizations also have the capacity to ensure that newcomers to disarmament forums have mentorship and assistance in navigating the archaic and patriarchal structures that dominate international discussions on peace and security. One way to support meaningful participation of women, women's organizations and networks in peace and security is to support the international campaigns and networks who have a proven track record in bringing diverse voices to the table.

Prevent, respond to, and end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated in conflict and sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other international personnel, including humanitarian and development staff

Displacement is closely linked to higher levels of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls including domestic violence, rape and forced/child marriage. Landmines and ERW prevent displaced women and girls from returning home leaving them at risk for sexual or gender-based violence over an extended period of time. For female landmine survivors, like all women and girls with disabilities, this risk is compounded.

Under Article 6 of the Ottawa Treaty, Canada is obligated to provide assistance to states needing support to meet their obligations regarding clearing landmines and assisting victims. In addition, supporting clearance and victim assistance will also help Canada meet this objective under the CNAP. Landmine clearance and victim assistance programs will indirectly reduce risk of sexual and gender-based violence by allowing women and girls to return to safety and by reducing the vulnerability of female landmine survivors. To achieve this will require a return to funding mine action consistently and strategically.

The mine action sector, like all sectors, has seen its share of issues with sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse. These are issues that are being actively addressed by a number of actors; however, there is much work to be done to end these crimes and ensure justice for those harmed. Mines Action Canada welcomes the focus on ending impunity for exploitation and abuse and will work with all those committed to these ends.

Promote and protect the women's and girls' human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings

One of the main focuses of Ottawa Treaty advocacy is the rights of landmine victims. Female landmine survivors face intersecting barriers to full realization of their human rights due to their gender, and their status as persons with acquired disabilities. Promotion of the rights of landmine victims often results in additional attention to the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights of women. Furthermore, the rights-based implementation of the Ottawa Treaty's provisions on victim assistance draw on international human rights documents including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

¹ Article 36, "Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation"
<http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf>

Organizations involved in implementing the Ottawa Treaty have long had a focus on gender equality. Hiring of women is a key priority for a number of organizations as a path towards gender equality and empowerment. As Mines Advisory Group and the HALO Trust wrote “Employment of women in mine action can change attitudes towards women. In post-conflict contexts employing female deminers brings women into the peacebuilding process and helps them contribute to the reconstruction of their communities.” Women deminers are not only employed but they are seen as powerful agents of change in their communities.

Meet the specific needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings, including the upholding of their sexual rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services

Victim assistance under the Ottawa Treaty requires age and gender sensitive services be provided to meet the needs of landmine victims and others with similar needs due to the principle of non-discrimination. Women and girls with disabilities, including landmine survivors, are often overlooked in humanitarian settings despite being among the most vulnerable. Age- and gender-sensitive data from the Landmine Monitor can assist in ensuring that women and girls with disabilities are taken into account when services are planned. Support to victim assistance programs in complex emergencies can help ensure that the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities are met.

Strengthen the capacity of peace operations to advance the WPS agenda, including by deploying more women and fully embedding the WPS agenda into CAF operations and police deployments

Landmine clearance is crucially important to keeping peace operations safe and often the United Nations Mine Action Service is closely linked to peace operations. When peace operations work with landmine clearance or explosive ordinance disposal teams, women and diverse voices will need to be consulted to prioritize tasks. Also, Canada can look at increasing the deployment of explosive ordinance professionals and other engineers in peace operations as a way of raising the number of women deployed.

Conclusion

The new CNAP sets ambitious objectives for national implementation of the Women, Peace and Security resolutions. The Women, Peace and Security agenda is crucially important to Canada’s work on disarmament issues including the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. By strengthening current efforts to implement the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines through a gender lens, Canada take concrete steps towards the five objectives outlined in the CNAP and towards an inclusive and peaceful world.

As Canada said in a joint statement on Gender and Disarmament Machinery at the 2017 First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly “the way disarmament issues are treated and discussed is affected by who participates in the discussion.”²

² Canada on behalf of a group of states, “Statement on Gender and the Disarmament Machinery,” 26 October 2017, http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com17/statements/26Oct_Canada_joint.pdf

Annex: Global Affairs Canada's Implementation Plan of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and the Ottawa Treaty

Specific implementation plans for each partner department of the Government of Canada were released as part of the launch of Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022 on Women, Peace and Security (CNAP).³ Global Affairs Canada is the lead department on the implementation of the CNAP especially in regards to disarmament issues such as the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. Global Affairs Canada has also published a detailed document outlining specific priorities, targets, activities and indicators for a number of programs and branches within the department.⁴

Some of these targets are relevant to the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and other disarmament efforts. This annex focuses on a small number specific targets listed in the implementation plan which have significant links to the Ottawa Treaty and disarmament work, however the entire implementation plan should be viewed through a disarmament lens.

Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat Reduction Program

5.1 Target: 10% of projects have GE01 (Limited Gender Equality Integration) or greater gender coding by the end of the fiscal year 2021/2022 to ensure the Program meets women's needs and interests

It is concerning that the baseline for this target indicates that current projects under the Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat Reduction Program do not have any gender coding. Both conventional weapons like landmines and weapons of mass destruction have differing impacts on men, women, boys and girls. Assuming that weapons of mass destruction threat reduction is a gender neutral activity furthers the marginalization of women and girls. Mines Action Canada would suggest setting a more ambitious target. Any efforts to reduce the threat from weapons of mass destruction should take into account women's needs and interests.

5.2 Target: Resolutions of the UN General Assembly's First Committee (responsible for disarmament, global challenges and threats), proposed or considered by Canada, integrate gender perspectives

The UN General Assembly's First Committee is a key forum for disarmament work on a variety of weapons. As the Canadian led statement on Gender and Disarmament Machinery stated acceptance of gender inclusiveness has been weak with disarmament forums across the United Nations. For example, the annual Ottawa Treaty resolution at First Committee did not mention gender or age- and gender-specific assistance to landmine survivors in 2017.⁵ This target will greatly assist in efforts to include gender perspectives and women in the United Nations First Committee.

³ "Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017-2022 - The implementation plans" http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_sexes/cnap_ip-pi_pnac-17-22.aspx?lang=eng#1

⁴ "Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017-2022 - Global Affairs Canada addendum for the implementation plan", <http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/cnap-ip-ad-eng.pdf>

⁵ Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction A/C.1/72/L.40, <http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com17/resolutions/L40.pdf>

Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

7.1 Target: Canada demonstrates strong commitment at the UN to ensuring increased and meaningful participation of women in peace resolution processes, including in conflict prevention, mediation and post-conflict reconciliation, and more specifically delegations to peace resolution processes.

If the focus is solely on peace processes this target will likely miss key aspects of the United Nations' work on peace, security and disarmament in New York. The United Nations General Assembly's First Committee (responsible for disarmament, global challenges and threats) has a role to play in creating a more inclusive and peaceful world. First Committee has very low levels of women's participation and for the most part, the women participating are not from conflict-affected areas. Canada could support efforts by civil society to increase the meaningful participation of women from conflict-affected areas who have experienced weapons-related harm in First Committee.

Permanent Mission of Canada in Geneva

9.1 Target: By the end of the fiscal year 2017/18, the Mission develops key messages on WPS and uses them systematically in multilateral institutions and processes, governing boards and councils, and advocacy groups that can effect change in the lives of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The Permanent Mission of Canada in Geneva hosts one of Canada's largest diplomatic efforts towards disarmament. The Mission leads diplomatically on the implementation and universalization of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and other disarmament treaties. Consistent messaging on women, peace and security from the Geneva Mission will be very helpful in ensuring that the voices of women and girls have a role in the implementation of these lifesaving treaties.

9.3 Target: By the end of the fiscal year 2019/20, each of the eight relevant Mission's programs support at least one engagement [with women or women's groups from fragile or conflict affected countries] per year. By the end of the fiscal year 2021/22, the Mission supports at least 20 women or women's groups per year.

There is considerable scope in this target for concrete actions to increase meaningful participation of female landmine survivors in the Ottawa Treaty as well as young women from landmine affected communities. The voices of female landmine survivors and of young women living with landmine contamination are crucially important to ensuring that the Ottawa Treaty is implemented in an inclusive manner. In order to reach out to these voices from the field, the Genevan Mission can work with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and similar networks across the disarmament sector.

Bilateral Engagement

Of the bilateral engagement programs listed in the addendum for the implementation plan, the Middle East, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Colombia, Afghanistan and Myanmar all have significant landmine problems. Each of these programs highlighted the importance of increasing women's participation in peace and security decision making. Additionally, it is important to ensure that mine action and disarmament projects as well as disarmament discussions also have increased women's meaningful participation. Disarmament should be incorporated into the women, peace and security work of Canada's bilateral programs.