



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Annual report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect: “Prioritizing prevention and strengthening response: women and the responsibility to protect”

*The twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the responsibility to protect comes in a year that marks several significant anniversaries: the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the responsibility to protect; the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on women’s rights; the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations itself. These milestones provide significant opportunities to place a focus on gender equality and the responsibility to protect. While the importance of gender equality and the participation of women across United Nations agendas has been made evident in recent years, the link with the responsibility to protect has been more implicit. This year’s report aims to address that gap by reflecting on the varied roles that women can play in supporting the prevention and protection of atrocity crimes. The report is divided into five main chapters:*

#### CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In an introductory chapter, the report recalls that the primary responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity remains with individual Member States, and that the international community has a responsibility to assist States in meeting those responsibilities. By adding these pillar I and pillar II dimensions, the chapter sets out the premise that a gender perspective can enhance the abilities of States, regional organizations and other actors to better implement the responsibility to protect, and that this effort will be more effective if it is approached in an inclusive manner. To this

end, the report aims at exploring the linkages and interconnections between implementing the responsibility to protect, strengthening gender equality, and the women, peace and security agendas.

#### CHAPTER II: GENDER EQUALITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

The second chapter focuses on the connections between gender equality and the responsibility to protect, recognizing that gender inequality and discrimination can increase the underlying risks associated with sexual and gender-based violence. Advancing gender equality is therefore

fundamental to implementing the responsibility to protect. In this context, the report underscores that a systematic approach to preventing atrocity crimes requires mainstreaming gender into early warning systems through: (a) the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators; (b) the collection of sex-disaggregated data; and (c) the equal and meaningful participation of women. The chapter also highlights the important role of regional and subregional organizations as well as global and regional networks in promoting the protection of women and girls. The report underlines the importance of supporting the development of regional frameworks for atrocity crimes risk assessments that are gender sensitive.

### **CHAPTER III: THE IMPACT OF ATROCITY CRIMES ON WOMEN AND GIRLS**

The third chapter notes that all four atrocity crimes and violations associated with the responsibility to protect agenda have a gendered impact. Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity can affect men and women differently. For example, women and girls are often disproportionately affected by trafficking, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, rape and other forms of widespread and systematic sexual and gender-based violence. As accountability for these crimes remains elusive, the chapter emphasizes that it is important for Member States to do more to end impunity for serious crimes committed against women and girls, as well as to strengthen the capacity of national institutions to ensure accountability for past crimes and therefore act as a deterrent to prevent such crimes in the future.

### **CHAPTER IV: VITAL ROLES OF WOMEN IN PREVENTION AND PROTECTION**

The fourth chapter looks at the important roles of women in supporting the prevention and protection of atrocity crimes. By drawing on examples of women's contributions to early warning, conflict resolution, peace operations, peacebuilding and justice and accountability, the report underscores that holistic atrocity prevention will only be possible if women's equal and meaningful participation is prioritized at all stages. A significant element to this involves not only recognizing and supporting the important roles that women already play, but also identifying the obstacles that prevent effective participation of women in decision-making and full and equal representation in all aspects of atrocity prevention. Civil society organizations remain invaluable in advancing such efforts. The report calls for promoting an enabling environment for civil society organizations to continue playing this role.

### **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conclusions chapter contains recommendations for further action by Member States aimed at strengthening gender equality and promoting women's equal and meaningful participation, protection and rights as instrumental to fulfilling their responsibility to protect populations against atrocity crimes. Member States are particularly encouraged to prioritize developing gender-specific indicators in national and regional early warning frameworks; addressing and countering gendered hate speech; supporting civil society organizations; and fully utilising

national focal points on the responsibility to protect and on women, peace and security in mainstreaming gender-based atrocity prevention in national and regional policies. The report also encourages Member States to increase efforts to end impunity, including for sexual and gender-based crimes, by ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); by improving access to justice especially for

women and girls; and by supporting regional and international accountability mechanisms for atrocity crimes.

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