



Women, Peace & Security

Malta's National Action Plan
for the Implementation of
United Nations Security Council
Resolution 1325

2020 – 2024



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Foreword by the Minister



Hon. Evarist Bartolo
Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

The findings of multiple studies have made it clear that the inclusion of women in peace and security processes contributes to reducing conflict and strengthening the sustainability of peace agreements.

Therefore, in this world of emergent insecurity and violence, every State, every regional and international organisation has a role to play in acknowledging the role of women in promoting sustainable peace and security. Tragically, we have seen that sudden health crises such as the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a different impact on women due to gender norms, roles and structural gender inequalities, which are exacerbated in conflict affected countries and post conflict contexts. This presents an additional challenge.

Resolution 1325 was adopted by the United Nations Security Council in 2000 and highlights the disproportionately negative impact on women and girls brought about by war and conflict, where sexual violence is rife. The exclusion of women and girls from the processes of prevention of violence, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping and peacebuilding comes at a considerable cost for peace. By shedding light on the intrinsic link between gender equality and security, the normative framework that has grown around the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda guides us in building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as mandated by Sustainable Goals 5 and 16 under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Malta's National Action Plan is closely aligned with its Development policy (which includes gender equality as one of its priorities) and its Gender policy. As we launch our first National Action Plan, I wish to convey our commitment to strengthening women's representation and including gender perspectives in all our peace and security measures.

Malta has become an increasingly multicultural country in which a growing number of women from conflict and conflict-affected areas reside. The plan seeks to ensure that the particular needs of women

who have experienced conflict are taken into account in the services provided in order to support their recovery from trauma. In 2017, the Consultative Council for Women's Rights was established with the aim of strengthening dialogue between the government and civil society as well as mainstream equality in all aspects of government's processes. Malta ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2014, and the Gender Based Violence (GBV) & Domestic Violence (DV) Act came into force in 2018. New legislation on Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence was enacted in May 2018.

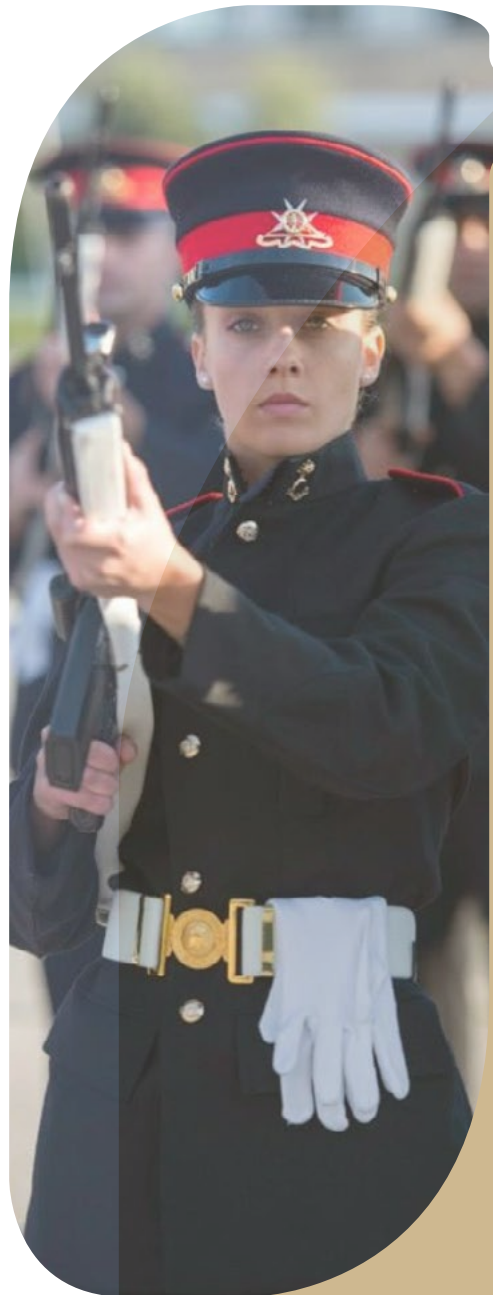
Malta is also very committed to combatting human trafficking through effective initiatives and legislations, as well as through efforts of prevention focused on awareness-raising campaigns and training activities aimed at combatting human trafficking. In 2011, the Maltese Government established an Anti-Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee with the aim to provide a stronger oriented policy strategy. Most recently, the Maltese Government joined the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign and launched the 'Human, Like You' national education campaign, both aimed at raising awareness on human trafficking. Such initiatives are taking place after Malta ratified the UN Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention (1930) in January 2019.

2020 marks the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 as well as the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, among others. I am, therefore, delighted that Malta will fulfil its commitment made in April 2019 at the United Nations to launch the first National Action Plan in 2020. As a signal of our strong commitment to UNSCR 1325, Malta has also appointed its first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, H.E. Cecilia Attard Pirotta, who will lead on all matters concerning Women, Peace and Security.

Malta's first National Action Plan, which covers a period of five years, will enable the Maltese Government to integrate these fundamental issues more systematically into its work. It not only includes provisions that concern external action in the field of diplomacy, but also features measures that strengthen prevention and protection measures at the national level.

List of Abbreviations

AFM	Armed Forces of Malta
AWAS	Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers
CDV	Commission on Domestic Violence
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSDP Missions	Common Security and Defence Policy Missions of the European Union
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EU	European Union
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
MJEG	Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MFCS	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity
MFEA	Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs
MFH	Ministry for Health
MHSE	Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement
MPF	Malta Police Force
NAP	National Action Plan
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security



1.0 Introduction

As armed conflict permeates the world, countless of lives are lost, millions are maimed, millions are displaced, and countless of infrastructural structures and systems are destroyed. Indeed, the impacts of armed conflict are felt by women and men alike, but there are tremendous differences.

During armed conflicts, women and girls are usually the main targets and suffer the impacts disproportionately, especially as rape and other forms of sexual violence have become increasingly used as weapons of warfare. This group of people are repeatedly exposed to the violence of war which affects their physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and material well-being. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated an already difficult situation, particularly in conflict affected countries and post conflict contexts. In the majority of these contexts the existing gender inequalities and exclusion of women from peace and security decision-making deepened; the political and socio-economic status of women deeply impacted by war and conflict worsened; and women experienced extremely limited access to critical health services, systems and information.



The WPS agenda does not only focus on situations where peace is immediately threatened, but also aims at ensuring high female participation in all spheres. This gives a clear linkage between domestic and outward-looking activities for 1325 implementation.



H.E Cecilia Attard Pirotta
Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security

It is important to stress that women and girls are not only victims but also active agents during armed conflicts. They are usually recruited voluntarily or forcibly by armed groups to perpetrate violence and support perpetrators of violence. Some are forced to serve as sex slaves, wives of rebel leaders, comfort women to military commanders, to mention but a few. This, in turn, makes them susceptible to continuous violent rape with terrible physical and psychological consequences. Yet, their access to post-conflict peacebuilding benefits are limited and their efforts at conflict resolution and rebuilding the political, social and economic fabric of their societies are disregarded during formal peace negotiations.

In view of this, an important question that comes to mind is: Where are the women? To answer this question, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in October 2000, which acknowledges the disproportionately harmful impacts of armed conflict on women and girls as well as the importance of gender equality in peace processes and conflict resolution. This Resolution is held in high regard as it was the first time that the UNSC dedicated a session to address the experiences of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The UNSCR 1325 recognises the role of women as active agents of peace and lays emphasis on the fact that peace is intrinsically linked with equality between men and women. The Resolution is based on the premise that sustainable peace can only be achieved through women's economic and political empowerment as well as their involvement in decision-making processes. It is firmly rooted in the knowledge that gender equality is a prerequisite for peace, security, sustainable development and justice.

WPS is a key component of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), which was updated in 2015 to include General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. The WPS agenda is also closely linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies.

Following the UNSCR 1325, the United Nations Security Council has adopted nine other related Resolutions: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2331 (2016), and 2493 (2019) to support and strengthen the first. Together they form the international framework on WPS. However, merely understanding theories is of no use unless it serves as a catalyst for action. Therefore, UN Member States are urged to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS as a way to implement the UNSCR 1325.

Furthermore, the EU Strategic Approach to WPS emphasises the need for concrete commitments and actions as well as the need to engage, empower, protect and support women and girls in order to achieve sustainable and lasting peace and security as intrinsic components of human rights and sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and the Consensus for Development. Additionally, promoting women's participation in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations is important to sustain the EU's credibility, to improve effectiveness, to promote equality at home and abroad, to increase the talent pool for personnel, and to make the best use of our financial resources.



1.1 Malta's Position on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

As a co-sponsor of the UNSCR 1325, Malta places great importance on the implementation of this resolution.

As a member of the United Nations, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth, among others, Malta strives to promote peace and security, prevent and respond to conflict, and assist in the rebuilding of societies after conflict. Throughout the years, Malta has demonstrated a continuous commitment to the engagement and protection of women and girls both locally and internationally.

In 1994 and 1995, Malta committed itself to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by signing and adopting the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, respectively. Malta proceeds with its work to achieve the commitments enshrined therein, also in line with the Agenda 2030 and the European Consensus on Development of 2017.

Malta ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2014, and the Gender Based Violence (GBV) & Domestic Violence (DV) Act came into force in 2018. Malta went through the monitoring mechanism of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in February 2020. It submitted its country report in September in 2019. The final GREVIO report on Malta will be issued

in November 2020. New legislation on Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence was enacted in May 2018.

In 2017, a Council for Women's Rights was established with the aim of strengthening dialogue between the government and civil society and mainstream equality in all aspects of government's processes.

Also in 2017, the Government of Malta launched the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan, which is the first national framework to ensure that legislation, policies and services address victims' needs holistically and as a societal concern.

In 2019, the female employment rate increased from 54.3% in 2014 to 66.1% in 2019, that is, by 11.8%. This is due not only to Malta's efforts in combatting gender stereotypes and awareness-raising on gender equality but also to the consistent empowering of women through various initiatives and introducing policies that favour the inclusion of women in the labour market, as well as to helping families to achieve a better work-life balance. Also, in March 2019, Malta signed the instrument of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW), which is another WPS deliverable.



As a state, we believe in consistently promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, as they are at the core of our European values. In addition, gender mainstreaming is government policy. The strategy of gender mainstreaming integrates the gender perspective across the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes to ensure that the circumstances and needs of different groups of women and men are given due consideration and are adequately addressed. The success of gender mainstreaming is only possible through strong political commitment, adequate institutional structures and procedures, as well as reinforced implementation across the policy areas.

We also believe that investing in the economic and political empowerment of women yields substantial results. Hence, our aim is to change the paradigm where women are perceived as helpless victims of conflict and foster an environment where women are recognised as leaders, policy motivators and decision makers.

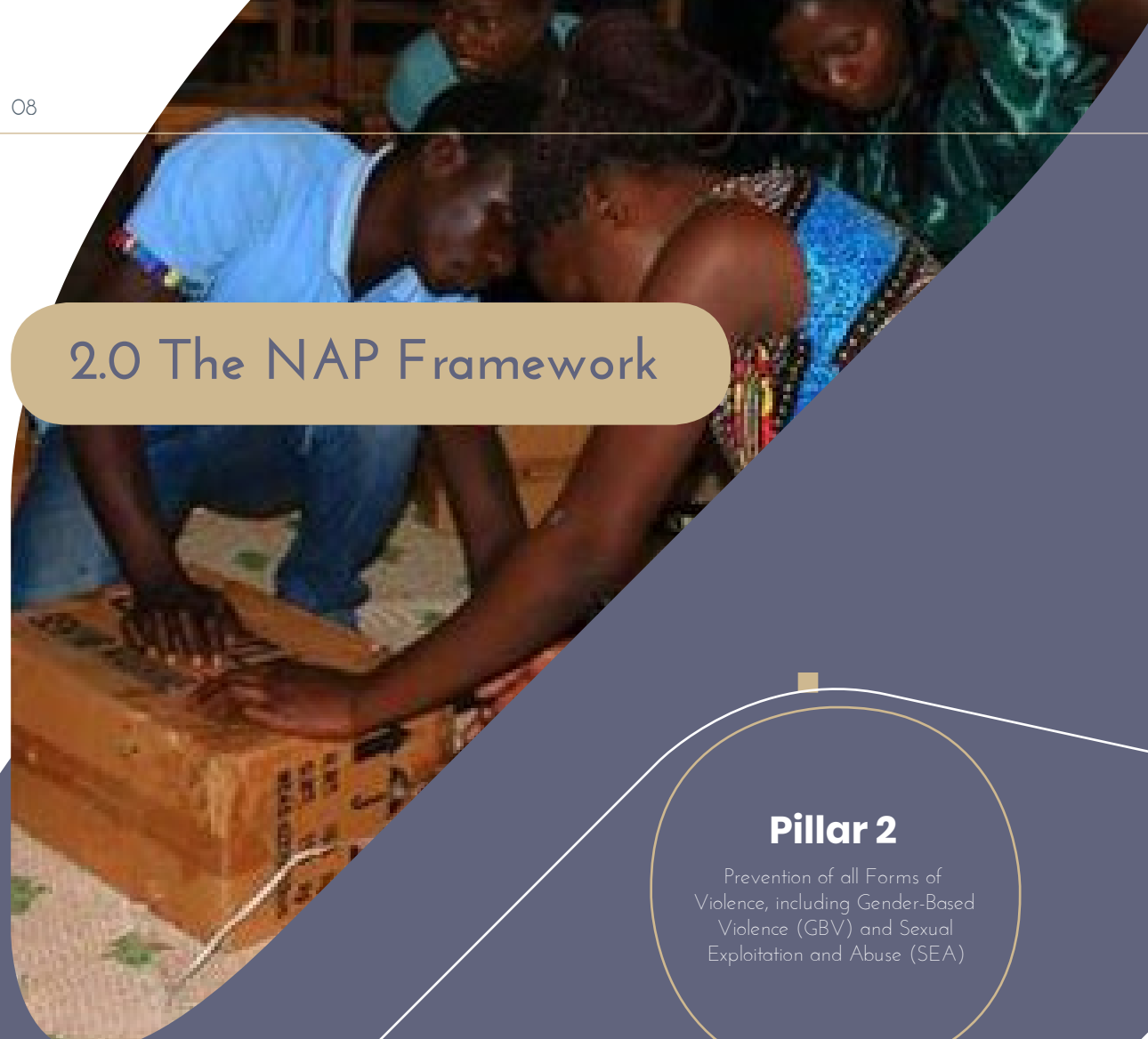
Despite the fact that we will soon be commemorating the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in October 2020, UN Member States and the UN are still far from achieving their goals. Women and girls are still adversely affected by conflict, they are still underserved during post-conflict peacebuilding (especially during Disarmament, Demobilisation and

Reintegration programmes), and there is still a need to increase women's active participation in conflict resolution and peace processes.

Thus, as an active member of the UN, this NAP on WPS is Malta's contribution to the implementation of the objectives outlined in the UNSCR 1325. The NAP, which is to cover a four-year period, will take into consideration Malta's activities on WPS in relation to humanitarian assistance, foreign policy, development, human rights, and peacekeeping among others. It shall be carried out in partnership with various government ministries and entities, and civil society.

This includes the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA), which will serve as coordinator of the NAP, the Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance (MJEG), the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement (MHSE), the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity (MFCS) including the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), the Ministry for Health, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), women, gender, migrant and youth NGOs, the Academia, and the National Council of Women.

2.0 The NAP Framework



Pillar 1
Promotion of the WPS Agenda Domestically and Internationally

Pillar 2
Prevention of all Forms of Violence, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Pillar 3
Increased Participation and Representation of Women at all Decision-Making Levels, including Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Pillar 4
Increased and Strengthened Partnerships to Accomplish the WPS Agenda Domestically

To implement the objectives outlined in the UNSCR 1325, this NAP is designed and structured around four pillars, namely: Promotion, Prevention, Participation and Partnership. Each pillar is vital in respecting human rights and dignity, tackling conflict, and building sustainable peace.

All the pillars are interrelated. Assigned to each pillar are objectives that Malta seeks to achieve within the five-year period. In a tabular form, the objectives, actions, indicators, implementation year and actors of each pillar are illustrated.

2.1 Pillar 1: Promotion of the WPS Agenda Domestically and Internationally

Sustainable peace and human security go hand-in-hand, and gender equality is pertinent to achieving both.

As a small island state strategically located in the Mediterranean, we believe that it is important to create awareness regarding the WPS agenda both domestically and internationally. This will trigger a sense of responsibility and ownership among UN Member States, international organisations including the UN, civil society organisations and individuals. By doing this, we also will be raising the voices and building the confidence of women peacebuilders in Malta and around the world to get involved in peacebuilding activities.

Domestically, our aim is to raise awareness and inform government ministries and civil society organisations about the WPS agenda and to provide support where necessary, such as training workshops and seminars, to mention but a few. We also will ensure that research is carried out in this area to further increase and update our knowledge on the phenomenon. Within the international fora, we will increase our efforts to support the achievement of WPS agenda and ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated in the activities of international organisations.

We strongly believe that the WPS agenda concerns both women and men and we thus underline the importance of engaging men and boys. Alongside women and girls, they are agents and beneficiaries of change in the peace and gender agenda.

Pillar 1: Promotion

Objectives	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Year	Actors
Raise awareness and sensitize local and foreign participants about the WPS agenda and Gender Equality.	Organise training workshops and seminars.	Number of projects launched in line with WPS. Number of outreach events organised.	2020-2024	MFEA, NCPE, CSOs.
	Establish a connection with the Maltese media to promote the WPS agenda.	Number of references made to WPS in public statements, press releases, etc.		MFEA
Promote and support knowledge sharing on WPS.	Conduct more research on the impacts of conflict on women as well as the roles of women in peace and security, among others.	Number of research initiatives sponsored. Number of conferences and seminars which disseminate information in this area.	2020-2024	MEDE, MFEA
Increase support for the WPS agenda internationally.	Advocate for the implementation of the WPS at the UN and the EU, especially in relation to DDR programmes, irregular migration, and trade in small arms.	Interventions made.	2020-2024	MFEA
	Full participation in the European Union Taskforce on UNSCR 1325 and follow-up resolutions.	Interventions made.		
	Advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the activities of international organisations.	Interventions made.		



2.2 Pillar 2: Prevention of all Forms of Violence, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Though the prevention of conflict and conflict-related gender-based violence is complex, Malta remains committed to strengthening peace and security by addressing this issue both at home and within the international fora.

Malta's work under this pillar will include awareness-raising on the issue of sexual violations, protection of sexual and reproductive health, training of personnel deployed to rescue missions, fight against female genital mutilation (FGM), and prevention of and addressing human trafficking. Additionally, the Human Rights Directorate within MJEG will form a Unit, which will be the coordinating body for Human Trafficking.

In relation to human trafficking, this being one of the gravest forms of human rights violation, the Maltese Government established an Anti-Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee in 2011 with the aim to provide a stronger oriented policy strategy. At present, the implementation of the current National Action Plan 2017-2019 is at its final stage. It is positive that all measures drawn up in this 3-year plan have, in fact, been implemented. It focused on training, research and awareness-raising. Various groups have undertaken training which has ranged from investigative to victim

identification. All members of the Judiciary have undertaken training about the indicators of human trafficking and about the standing and the rights of victims of human trafficking. Likewise, an awareness-raising campaign was addressed at the general public, while a project aimed at enhancing awareness within the business community was also implemented. A second national study was conducted amongst women and children living in Open Centres in Malta, looking into their potential vulnerability to being trafficked and their rights as migrants in Malta. Other measures taken by government were the launching of a website, handouts and school prevention curricula. The labour inspectorate continued to focus on sectors with an elevated risk of exploitation. Teams of police, labour inspectors and health care personnel continued to conduct brothel inspections, including close observation of signs of trafficking. Authorities trained immigration, hotel, aviation, customs, and labour inspection staff in methods of identifying trafficking victims and child sex tourism.

A memorandum of understanding on human trafficking was signed between Malta and the United Kingdom. The two countries agreed to support each other in the fight against human trafficking, particularly in the sharing of best practices and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent human trafficking.

Pillar 2: Prevention

Objectives	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Year	Actors
Raise public awareness on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence.	Organise events, campaigns and seminars on sexual and gender-based violence.	Number of campaigns and events organised. Websites created.	2020-2024	MFEA, MFH, MJEG, CDV CSOs
	Implementation of the Istanbul Convention..	Report produced.		MJEG CDV
Protection of sexual and reproductive health.	Provide adequate support including treatment and counselling to victims of sexual violence.	Number of health personnel deployed to migrant camps.	2020-2024	MFH
Continuous training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for all relevant personnel.	Organise training sessions for officials working with migrant asylum seekers living in the Initial Reception Centres, and other personnel.	Number of officials from AWAS, AFM and Malta Police Force trained.	2020-2024	MHSE, AWAS, AFM, MPF MJEG CDV
Fight against female genital mutilation.	Create awareness using the media.	Campaigns/Projects	2020-2024	MFEA, MJEG, CSOs.
	Advocate for the elimination of female genital mutilation within international fora.	Interventions made.		MFEA
Prevent human trafficking.	Continuous awareness-raising aimed at the general public.	Websites created. Programmes launched.	2020-2024	MFEA, MHSE, MJEG, FSWS, CSOs.
	Increase training programmes for Immigration Police and civilian immigration officers.	Number of training programmes.		MHSE, MPF.

2.3 Pillar 3: Increased Participation and Representation of Women at all Decision-Making Levels, including Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

As previously mentioned, Malta is very keen on fostering an environment where women are viewed not only as victims of conflict but also as active peacebuilders and agents of change.

We strongly believe that if women are empowered politically and economically, and are given the opportunity to influence decisions, peace and development will become more sustainable.

As a country, we will continue to support the empowerment of women and girls by increasing opportunities in leadership, access to education and training. This includes our Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme to Third Country Nationals, and increasing and supporting the participation of women in the armed forces and diplomatic corps, to mention but a few. Our aim is to dismantle every barrier to the empowerment of women and ensure that women and men are given the same opportunities.

We also realise that the inclusion of young people is paramount to achieving the WPS agenda locally. Thus, we will focus on tapping into this viable resource and raise the voices of young peacebuilders and agents of change on the island, while also recognising the connection between WPS and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS).

Pillar 3: Participation

Objectives	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Year	Actors
Promote the equal representation of women in leadership positions within the Civil Service and other Government Entities.	Nominate a Maltese advisor on gender issues in human rights, amongst others.	Percentage of women elected to leadership positions.	2020-2024	All stakeholders.
	Provide a platform for women to engage in dialogues on peace and conflict-related issues such as DDR, migration, arms control, etc., which will, in turn, influence policies.	Number of discussion forums organised and attended by women in MFEA.		
Strengthen the voices and build the confidence of young women to participate in conflict-prevention and mediation, as well as peacebuilding activities by equipping them with knowledge.	Ensure gender balance when selecting candidates participating in scholarships and traineeships offered through Malta's Official Development and Humanitarian Aid .	Number of female and male candidates received and sponsored. Increased funding.	2020-2024	MFEA, MEDE.
Encourage and increase the recruitment and retention of women in the Armed Forces.	Offer more training to women. Evaluate what resources are required to encourage and retain women in the Armed Forces, for example: more incentives for women, family friendly measures etc. Conduct research to identify and understand any barriers that women face in entering and remaining in the AFM.	Number of women recruited annually.	2020-2024	MHSE, AFM.
	Organise career workshops and recruitment sessions to encourage more women to join the Armed Forces.	Number of sessions.		MHSE, AFM.
	Continue to adopt a transparent recruitment policy where women in the military are not discriminated against.	Annual monitoring.		MHSE, AFM.
Improve and strengthen the connection between WPS and YPS.	Support organisations working with young people to build their confidence and raise their voices.	Increased funding to support girls' empowerment. Number of events organised related to WPS and YPS.	2020-2024	MFEA, MJEG.
	Develop projects in line with the WPS agenda.	Number of projects launched.		CSOs



2.4 Pillar 4: Increased and Strengthened Partnerships to Accomplish the WPS Agenda Domestically

Partnership is considered to be the most important aspect when it comes to achieving the WPS agenda domestically. We recognise that it is pertinent to work in solidarity with national stakeholders, as well as with regional, bilateral and multilateral agencies, to adopt a unified approach towards the implementation of this agenda.

This will result in collective support for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, thereby increasing its chances of success.

As aforementioned, at the national level, horizontal cooperation will be established among government ministries, CSOs, and women's groups. At the regional and international level, partnerships will be established with regional, bilateral and multilateral institutions, based on Malta's specific needs and the partners' expertise, to increase resources and capacity to implement the WPS agenda. A case in point here will be the notion of training the trainers, where a partnership agreement is signed.

Pillar 4: Partnership

Objectives	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Year	Actors
Build and strengthen partnerships with government ministries, international organisations within the country, and CSOs to accomplish the WPS agenda.	Make information material on WPS available on the websites of institutions.	Websites of institutions updated.	2020-2024	All stakeholders.
	Channel adequate resources, including funding for the implementation of the WPS agenda. Form a consultative committee and hold regular meetings to measure the progress and commitment of each institution to the WPS agenda.	Number of meetings held annually.		MFEA
Identify and establish partnerships with potential bilateral, regional and multilateral agencies to support the implementation of the WPS agenda at home.	Sign partnership agreements on training and capacity building, and/or funding.	Number of partnerships established.	2020-2024	MFEA



3.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Minister for Foreign and European Affairs will appoint an Oversight Committee which will include representatives from government ministries, civil society, academia and independent individuals with relevant experience and expertise.

Its responsibilities will include:

- supervising the regular and systematic evaluation of progress on achieving the outlined objectives and actions across all pillars in the NAP;
- revising existing actions and targets in light of emerging issues and policy agendas on Women, Peace and Security, and in response to lessons learned coupled with challenges identified in the monitoring process;
- using outreach and communication mechanisms to ensure regular dissemination of updates to the stakeholders and, in particular, make sure that the perspectives of women affected by conflict are incorporated into the ongoing work of the Committee.

The Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs will lead and chair the Committee, and will coordinate all reporting in view of Malta's commitments to the WPS agenda. The Committee will meet up to four times a year once the NAP is launched. These meetings will also include reporting on each of the four pillars by the different members of the Committee.

An evaluation process of the first National Action Plan will commence at the end of 2023 and will end in June 2024, and preparations for the second National Action Plan, which will cover the period 2025-2029, will then start. The evaluation process will also include recommendations.

The second NAP will be based on recommendations made during the first implementation phase and will include consultations with government ministries and entities as well as civil society.

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