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CNAP Update: First progress report and an ambassador for women, peace and security

by Monique Cuillerier

On November 1 the Government of Canada launched Canada's second National Action Plan on women, peace and security (CNAP), which is for the period from 2017 to 2022. The first progress report, which only covers November 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018, was tabled in the House of Commons at the end of September.

The main part of the progress report summarizes the work done by various government partners to address Canada's commitments to: increase the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict situations; address sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and as perpetrated by peacekeepers and humanitarian and development workers; promote human rights and gender equality in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings; provide access to sexual and reproductive health services and other specific needs of women and girls in humanitarian situations; and build capacity in peace operations in the service of advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

The government partners that contribute to the CNAP are Global Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Status of Women Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, the Department of Justice, Public Safety Canada, and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Specific departmental progress reports are available from each of the partners.

These departmental reports vary in the depth and extent of reporting, largely due to their varying engagement with women, peace and security.

The inclusion of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada marks a new consideration within the CNAP of Canada's domestic situation. Their shared departmental progress report ends by saying, "As

Canada learns from these experiences domestically, it will also continue to improve its capacity to respond to similar challenges faced by women and girls abroad.”

As with progress reports related to the first National Action Plan, there are some issues and outstanding questions with the report. In the main body of the report, overall objectives are given ratings (such as 'mostly on track') but no methodology for these ratings, or indeed specific targets for the objectives, are given. In specific areas, as well, there are vague statements (for example, saying that there are accountability gaps in the area of sexual assault in peace operations but not saying what they are or what exactly is being done). However, overall more effort and thoughtfulness has been put into this report than previous ones and the extent of information provided, especially in the annexes is appreciated.

Additionally, the progress report reiterated Minister Freeland's September announcement of the creation of an Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, along with an office to support the position. Earlier, Liberal Member of Parliament Borys Wrzesnewskyj had introduced a private members' motion calling on the government to develop a plan to appoint a Women, Peace and Security Ambassador and had, indeed, held limited consultations on the plan over the summer. Wrzesnewskyj's motion calls for the Ambassador to have a range of responsibilities, including promoting research relating to conflict and conflict resolution, initiating and promoting national policies and programs related to the reduction and prevention of conflict and the empowerment of women and girls; encouraging the development of gender and peace-based initiatives by governmental and non-governmental entities; leading the implementation of the Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and assessing the annual progress reports; and promoting gender equality in peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

The Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada, of which WFMC is a member, has long recommended such a position and eagerly awaits further information about the position and what responsibilities the Ambassador will have.

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