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Iceland's National Action Plan on women, peace and security 2025–2030

Government of Iceland
Ministry for Foreign Affairs



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Introduction

With United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), adopted in 2000, the Council recognised for the first time the gendered impact of conflict and the crucial role of women in peace and security efforts. Iceland has actively promoted UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and was among the first UN Member States to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) in 2008. Iceland now presents its fourth National Action Plan for 2025-2030.

Iceland contributes to various women, peace and security initiatives and programs through the United Nations, NATO, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other entities working in this field and remains a strong champion in international fora for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peace and security efforts. Domestically, the focus has been on integrating UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions into policies related to security and defence, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance, improving the gender balance among seconded staff to international organisations, and awareness raising.

The empowerment of women and girls and respect for their human rights are key priorities in Iceland's foreign policy, including its international development cooperation policy and national security policy. Iceland's strong record on gender equality, as reflected in its high ranking on global indices, carries with it a responsibility to share lessons learned and contribute to the advancement of gender equality internationally. These efforts complement the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda set out in this NAP.

Gender mainstreaming is emphasised across all policy areas which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland. Around two-thirds of Iceland's official development assistance supports the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Women's political empowerment and political participation remain a key priority, both at home and abroad. Iceland also places a strong focus on women's economic empowerment and participation in trade and gender perspectives are gradually being integrated into climate policy and action.

Human rights and democratic values are increasingly under threat, with significant setbacks to the rights of women and girls around the world. Sexual and reproductive rights are being undermined, while modern technology is used to fuel gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and undermine women's influence and political participation. Iceland has actively fought against this backlash, including in multilateral settings and through collaboration with like-minded countries.

Active promotion of the women, peace and security agenda is as important today as it was when the Security Council adopted its first resolution on the subject. Women and girls are not spared from the impact of rising conflicts, instability, and violent extremism, which has caused untold human suffering, mass displacement and humanitarian crises. At the same time, climate change is both exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and causing new ones, while new technologies are being used in various ways to create chaos and uncertainty within societies.

With this fourth National Action Plan, Iceland intends to play its part in the advancement of the women, peace and security agenda – at home and abroad.¹

The Plan is based on three key pillars:

- 1 First, increasing women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peace and security efforts through actively promoting the women, peace and security agenda, training and capacity building, and providing financial support for international partners and civil society organisations.
- 2 Second, enhancing the protection of women and girls in conflict settings, particularly by integrating gender perspectives into humanitarian work and the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, emphasizing prevention, protection and accountability for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in conflict settings.
- 3 Third, continued implementation of gender-responsive measures in the work of ministries and national agencies tasked with security and defence matters in Iceland, including zero-tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

¹ The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) will oversee the overall implementation of the NAP. The following ministries, agencies and institutions are responsible for specific actions: The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (MSL), National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police (NCP), Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG), Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (GRÓ/GEST), Institute of International Affairs (IIA), Directorate of Labour (DL)

1. Full, equal and meaningful participation of women

Wars and conflicts impact men, boys, women and girls differently, making it crucial to incorporate gender perspectives into policy- and decision-making processes relating to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Iceland strongly advocates for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes and international security and defence cooperation. The Government of Iceland will continue to work closely with international partners and like-minded countries in this area and engage with grassroots organisations operating in conflict settings or peacebuilding contexts. Furthermore, Iceland aims to continue offering fellowships and training in gender equality studies to young professionals from conflict and post-conflict settings. Iceland will continue to support international organisations working on the women, peace and security agenda through financial contributions, secondment of experts, and sharing of knowledge and experience. As Iceland continues to provide long-term support for Ukraine's defence and reconstruction efforts, attention will be given to gender perspectives across projects and partnerships.

Objective 1: Full, equal and meaning participation of women in peace processes, peacebuilding and security and defence

Impact	Action	Performance Indicators	Responsibility
1.1. Increased awareness in conflict settings of the positive impact of gender equality and the WPS agenda has increased	1.1.1. Training of young professionals from conflict settings in gender equality studies, mediation, and the WPS agenda	1.1.1.1. Number of fellows from fragile and conflict-affected states in gender equality studies at GRÓ-GEST	GRÓ GEST, IAA
		1.1.1.2. Number of courses and events on women, peace and security, including the role of women in mediation	GRÓ GEST, IAA
1.2. Increased knowledge and emphasis on the WPS agenda within international institutions	1.2.1. Active promotion of the WPS agenda on the international stage	1.2.1.1. Participation in regional and international cooperation on women, peace and security	MFA
	1.2.2. Secondment of WPS experts to international organisations	1.2.2.1. Number of experts seconded to international organisations to work on women, peace and security	MFA
	1.2.3. WPS training for all seconded professionals working on security, defence, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance	1.2.3.1. Percentage of seconded professionals who receive training	MFA
	1.2.4. Awareness raising among men on the importance of gender perspectives in conflict and post-conflict settings, and in security and defence	1.2.4.1. Number of events focusing on men and gender equality in the field of security and defense	MFA
1.3. Increased visibility and influence of women in peace and peacebuilding, and in security and defence	1.3.1. Support to and cooperation with institutions and organisations working to increase the participation of women in peace processes and peacebuilding	1.3.1.1. Gender perspectives have been integrated into Iceland's support for Ukraine's defence and reconstruction efforts	MFA
		1.3.1.2. Financial contributions to UN Women, UN DPPA, and other international partners working in the field of women, peace and security	MFA
		1.3.1.3. Financial contributions to women's organisations from areas affected by conflict, including through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF); consultation with women's grassroots organisations, including in relation to Iceland's tenure at the Human Rights Council and international meetings, including at the ministerial level	MFA

2. Protection of women and girls

Today, around two billion people are estimated to live in conflict-affected areas. In recent years, the number of displaced people has also grown at an alarming rate, reaching 123 million in 2024. In responding to this situation, the specific needs of women and girls must be considered, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Protecting women and girls from human rights violations, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, is also vital. Iceland will, therefore, work to ensure gender mainstreaming in humanitarian efforts, in line with Iceland's policy for international development cooperation and its strategy for humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, Iceland will continue efforts to eliminate the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and contribute to prevention, accountability, and support for survivors. Gender perspectives will also be integrated into processes and procedures for the reception of women refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland.

Goal 2: Address the needs of women in vulnerable situations due to conflict and instability

Impact	Action	Performance Indicators	Responsibility
2.1. Gender perspectives are integrated into humanitarian efforts	2.1.1. Promotion of gender mainstreaming in the work of international humanitarian organisations	2.1.1.1. Active engagement with humanitarian partners, including OCHA, CERF, WFP, UNHCR, UNRWA and the ICRC	MFA
	2.1.2. Support for international organisations and programmes working to integrate gender perspectives into humanitarian efforts, including assistance to refugees	2.1.2.1. Financial contribution to UN Women, UNFPA and other programmes and funds.	MFA
2.2. Zero-tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in international cooperation and international organisations, including peacekeeping operations	2.2.1. Support for international efforts on prevention, protection and accountability for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in conflict settings	2.2.1.1. Participation in international efforts against gender-based and sexual violence in conflicts; financial contributions to organisations and projects that support prevention, accountability and assistance to victims	MFA
	2.2.2. Implementation of policies and procedures against gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in Iceland's international cooperation in the field	2.2.2.1. Continued implementation of CAPSEAH ² in development cooperation and security and defence, including through training for all field staff	MFA
2.3. Meeting the needs of women refugees or asylum seekers in Iceland	2.3.1. Integration of gender perspectives in services for refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland	2.3.1.1. Gender-responsive approach has been implemented in the services provided by the Directorate of Labour for refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland	MSH, DL

² Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment.

3. Gender perspectives in National Security and Defence

Iceland's strong international reputation for gender equality amplifies its international advocacy efforts. To underpin our international efforts, Iceland must uphold the highest standards regarding women's participation and integration of gender perspectives in the work of ministries and government agencies responsible for security and defence. Achieving a greater gender balance at home and increasing women's expertise in these areas is essential to ensure that Iceland is represented equally by men and women on the international stage. Therefore, more effort will be made to highlight the contribution of women in Iceland's security and defence and promote women role models to increase women's participation and foster positive attitudes towards women in this field. Targeted efforts and procedures to eliminate gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are already in place within key government agencies working in this field and must be rigorously implemented.

Goal 3: Iceland leads by example

Impact	Action	Performance indicator	Responsibility
3.1. Equal gender ratios in ministries and government agencies responsible for security and defence	3.1.1. Measures to promote equal career advancement of women and men within ministries and government agencies in the field of security and defence	3.1.1.1. Gender ratio of employees in the foreign service and in key government institutions working in the field of security and defence	MFA, NCP, ICG
		3.1.1.2. Gender ratio of seconded experts working in international law enforcement and defence cooperation	MFA, NCP, ICG
	3.1.2 Measures to increase visibility of women in the field of security and defence, both nationally and internationally	3.1.2.1. Gender ratio in Iceland's official delegations in the field of security and defence	MFA
		3.1.2.2. Visibility is given to the role of women in public communication around defence-related projects	MFA
3.2. Gender perspectives are integrated into policies and plans relating to security and defence at relevant ministries and government agencies	3.2.1. Inclusion of gender perspectives in national defence and emergency plans	3.2.1.1. Gender perspectives are integrated into defence plans	MFA
		3.2.1.2. Gender perspectives are integrated into civil protection response plans	MFA, MoJ, PMO
3.3. Zero-tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment within ministries and government agencies	3.3.1. Full implementation of SEAH policies at ministries and government agencies responsible for security and defence	3.3.1.1. Processes to combat gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment have been constantly and fully implemented	MFA, NCP, ICG

4. Implementation of the National Action Plan

This National Action Plan was drafted following consultations with partner institutions, academia, and CSOs. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will oversee its overall implementation, while ministries and institutions are responsible for specific actions and performance indicators.

The Ministry will consult regularly with the respective ministries and institutions and report on implementation progress, including through the Annual Report of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to Parliament and international reporting mechanisms.

For the duration of the NAP, CSOs and academia will be consulted regularly on implementation progress and on ways to promote the women, peace and security agenda.

List of actions in Iceland's Fourth National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security

Goal 1: Full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, peacebuilding and security and defence

Action	Responsibility
Training of young professionals from conflict settings in gender equality studies, mediation, and the WPS agenda	GRÓ GEST, IAA
Active promotion of the women, peace, and security agenda on the international stage	MFA
Secondment of WPS experts to international organisations	MFA
WPS training for all seconded professionals working on security, defence, development cooperation, and humanitarian assistance	MFA
Awareness raising among men on the importance of gender perspectives in conflict and post-conflict settings, and in security and defence	MFA
Support to and cooperation with institutions and organisations working to increase the participation of women in peace processes and peacebuilding	MFA

Goal 2: Address the needs of women in vulnerable situations due to conflict and instability

Action	Responsibility
Promotion of gender mainstreaming in the work of international humanitarian organisations	MFA
Support for international organisations and programmes working to integrate gender perspectives into humanitarian efforts, including assistance to refugees	MFA
Support for international efforts on prevention, protection and accountability for gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in conflict settings	MFA
Implementation of policies and procedures against gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in Iceland's international cooperation in the field	MFA
Gender perspectives are considered in the reception of refugees and asylum seekers in Iceland	MSL, DA

Goal 3: Iceland leads by example

Action	Responsibility
Measures taken to promote the equal career advancement of women and men within ministries and government agencies in the field of security and defence	MFA, NCP, ICG
Increasing visibility of women in the field of security and defence, both nationally and internationally	MFA
Inclusion of gender perspectives in national defence and emergency plans	MFA, NCP, MoJ, PMO
Full implementation of SEAH policies at ministries and government agencies responsible for security and defence	MFA, NCP, ICG

United Nations security council resolutions on women, peace and security

- 1 **Resolution 1325 (2000)** the Security Council recognises for the first time the special position of women in conflict zones and the importance of their role in peace-building.
- 2 **Resolution 1820 (2008)** addresses sexual violence against women and girls during armed conflict. It stresses the need to prosecute perpetrators.
- 3 **Resolution 1888 (2009)** provides that all sexual violence against women and children in armed conflicts should be stopped.
- 4 **Resolution 1889 (2009)** urges Member States, United Nations bodies, donors and civil society organisations to ensure gender equality and participation in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
- 5 **Resolution 1960 (2010)** reiterates the need to strengthen actions against sexual violence. The need to enforce accountability of perpetrators of such war crimes, publishing their names and making it clear that impunity will no longer be tolerated.
- 6 **Resolution 2106 (2013)** addresses the accountability of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict and emphasises the importance of women's political and economic empowerment.
- 7 **Resolution 2122 (2013)** aims to strengthen the position of women at all stages of peace processes and emphasises women in leadership.
- 8 **Resolution 2242 (2015)** emphasises women's role in the fight against extremism and terrorism. It is also proposed that the Security Council improves its work procedures pertaining to women, peace and security.
- 9 **Resolution 2272 (2016)** addresses sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations.
- 10 **Resolution 2331 (2016)** is the first resolution where human trafficking is condemned noting its effects in conflicts and how it fosters insecurity.

