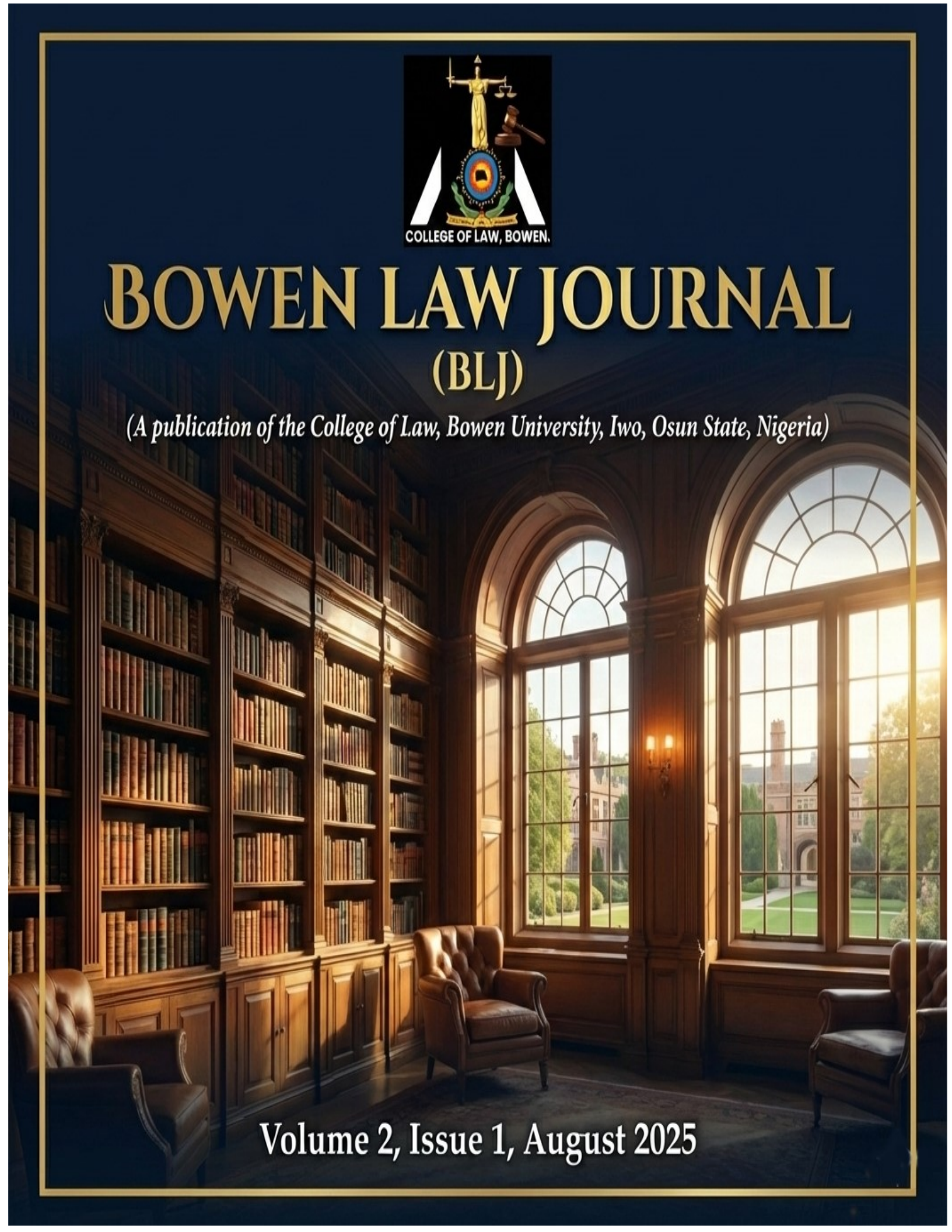
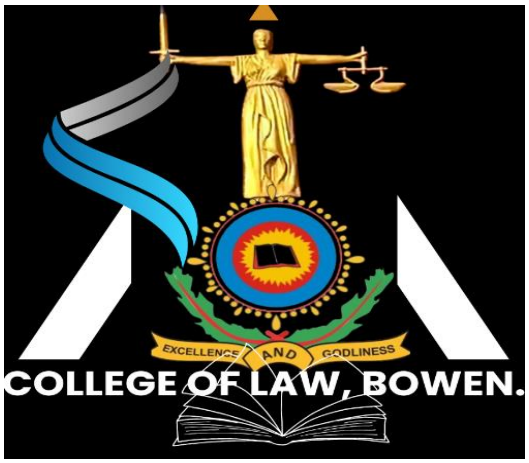

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Editorial

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College of Law, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.

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This edition of *Bowen Law Journal* is not only a resuscitation of the publication but its first online edition. It is appearing at a time that the world has become a global village, interconnected and observable by technological means. The journal, the content of which is peer reviewed, is therefore purposed for global impact through the projection of the dignified visibility of its contributors.

The journal accepts contributions on all areas of the law as is apparent from the present contents that span the areas of criminal law and criminology, human rights, employment law, law and medicine, security, peace, and tourism as well as business law generally, including taxation.

The thematic coverage of this journal accommodates impactful and scholarly contributions towards the advancement of the knowledge of law and its application in society. Significantly, the journal is interested in contributions that ensure that law addresses the intricacies of human relations and dealings as well as order in the world we live in.

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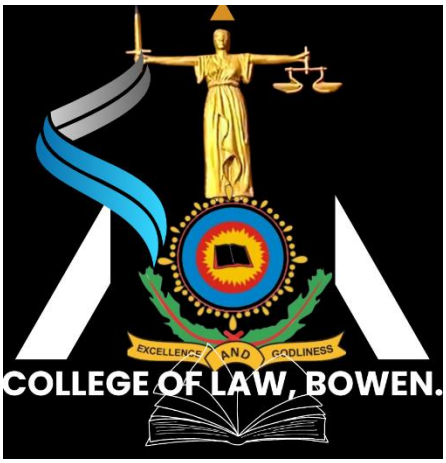
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APPRAISIAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS PACT FOR THE FUTURE, 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOMENT GOALS AND WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE AND SECURITY.

Abstract

In 2015, United Nations unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to provide a pointer for an enduring peace and prosperity in the planet. The 17 SDGs targeted diverse areas of development including gender equality as Goal 5 and respect for peace and security as Goal 16. The SDGs compliments existing norms for promotion of peace and security in the world. Despite this commitment of the UN Security Council on Women Peace and Security, through Resolution 1325 amongst others women are still marginalized in peace processes and their participation in the overall governance and development is still minimal in most countries in Africa. This paper x-rays the contributions of women in Africa towards peace and security, despite these obstacles and takes a cursory look at the recently adopted UN Pact for the Future for available opportunities towards inclusion and participation of women in peace building. As the world looks forward to Agenda 2030, the paper proposes the need to strengthen institutional frameworks, put in place concrete policy actions such as integrating gender mainstreaming in national prevention strategies, ensuring accountability for conflict-related gender-based issues, implementing gender quotas for political representation, and increasing investment in conflict prevention. It posited that these measures are essential to achieving the objectives of the UN Pact for the Future, the SDGs, and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

Keywords: *Africa, Women, Conflict resolution, Peace building, SDGs*

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The global quest for sustainable peace has been one of the hallmark challenges of the twenty-first century. Over the decades, responses to conflicts have become more complex, with the emergence of new concerns, like violent extremism, climate-related disasters, insurgencies and terrorism, manifesting in wider dimensions and scale.[241] These developments have further highlighted women's traditional participation in horizontal network and how their roles can contribute to conflict resolution, negotiations and peacebuilding.[242] Women had been positioned as change agents due to the established commonality and vibrancy in communities, as dated back through history to the pre-colonial period.[243] Since the first World War, women have been disproportionately affected by war, terrorism, conflicts, and their cascading consequences. They have suffered unquantifiable loss, and have been denigrated as booties of wars.

Basically, the post-World Wars global order and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, led to the internationalization and conceptualization of peace as a human right, and an attribute necessary for the promotion of a just and equal society. In 1949, the UN adopted the Commission on the Status of Women to become an instrument for bringing issues of women to the front burner to ensure equality between men and women.[244] By 1970, women issues began to feature on global agenda. Thus in 1975, the '*United Nations Decade for Women'* was launched, which was propelled '*by the vision to promote the agency of women and their role for peace and equality*'.[245] The decade birthed three other international conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen and Kenya. During this period, there were discourses on the importance of women's participation, the significance of women's involvement in development projects and gender-responsive frameworks, and the adoption of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for inclusion of women in UN agendas, structures and institutions. The gender mainstreaming approach was adopted as a prominent strategy in peace negotiations, humanitarian efforts, and post-conflict governance, becoming a beacon of hope for inclusion. The demand for inclusion and participation through the approach culminated in the adoption of the United Nations Security Council's historic Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security. UNSCR 1325 is a very significant resolution that takes into cognizance the role of women as peacebuilders and catalysts of change. It calls upon the UN, member states, civil society, and the international community to ensure enhanced women's participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and all peace processes, including decision-making and reconstruction initiatives.

Since the adoption of this resolution, many national governments have adopted the National Action Plans (NAPs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) to ensure commitments to supporting the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and to respond to the issue of its slow implementation. In recent years, women activists have seized the opportunities presented by the UNSCR 1325 to reiterate their indispensability in the process of peace building and peace negotiations.[246] Nevertheless, the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality persists, as conflicting

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[241] Ibrahim A. Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, 'How Much War Will We See? Explaining the Prevalence of Civil War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46:3 (2002), pp. 307-334 in Akiyode-Afolabi, Abiola (2013) *Gender justice in post-conflict societies: an assessmentof Sierra Leone and Liberia.* PhD thesis. SOAS, University of London. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00016643

[242]UN Women (2022) Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace and Political Process in Fragile Context https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/What%20We%20Do/Peace-security/WPS-Brief-Womens-meaningful-participation-in-peace-and-political-processes-in-fragile-contexts-en.pdf (Downloaded on the 2nd March 2024)

[243] Shulika, Lukong S. Women and Peace Building: From Historical to Contemporary African Perspectives. Ubuntu Volume 5, Number 1 2016, pp7-31

[244] UN General Assembly, Commission on the Status of Women, A/RES/2587, UN General Assembly, 15 December 1969, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1969/en/26728 [accessed 28 February 2025]

[245] UN General Assembly, Commission on the Status of Women, A/RES/2587, UN General Assembly, 15 December 1969, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1969/en/26728 [accessed 28 February 2025]

[246] In Liberia women were mobilized by the Women in Peace Network (WIPNET) to advocate for peace and they through the Mano River Union Peace Network participated in the formal peace talk in Accra in 2003. In Sierra Leone women through their networks participated in Lome Peace Accord.

strategic goals, resource constraints, and wavering political will, continue to undermine the practicalities of the resolution and its initiatives. Bridging this gap demands not only a commitment to gender equality, but also a recognition of its inherent complexity, requiring multifaceted strategies that address the connecting layers of oppression experienced during conflict by the womenfolk in conflict-affected regions. While women have soared economically, they are still not visible in the political space as a result of systemic challenges related to patriarchy and traditional gender norms, which restricted women from right to education, owning properties particularly land and inclusion in decision making.[247]

Evidence from global data from the United Nations in 2024, shows glaring differences, with women making up only 9% of peace negotiators and having fewer leadership positions in areas affected by war. This exclusion not only undermines the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts but also perpetuates cycles of inequality and instability. In 2015, the United Nations member states unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides '*a shared blue print for peace and prosperity on the planet, now and in future*'[248] Within this agenda is the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, representing global call and partnership for prosperity and tranquillity. In preparation for the 2030 Agenda and the realization of the SDG , the report of the United Nations on Sustainable Development Goals, shows that only 17% of the SDGs targets are on track; a huge number of the targets have been stalled and at the risk of retrogression.[249] With the current threats to the achievement of the SDGs, '*The Pact of the Future'* adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2024, provides hope for a more sustainable growth that can further facilitate peace-building.

With the UNGA 2024 report, showing the threats to SDG 16, and the need for more institutional and structural frameworks for global peace and inclusive societies; this article provides a historical context on the role of women in peacebuilding, and the need for an intentional approach to ensure that women form a major part of the inclusive societies. As the world looks forward to Agenda 2030, the paper proposes the need to strengthen institutional frameworks, put in place concrete policy actions such as integrating gender mainstreaming in national prevention strategies, ensuring accountability for conflict-related gender issues, implementing gender quotas for political representation, and increasing investment in conflict prevention. It posited that these measures are essential to achieving the objectives of the UN Pact for the Future, the SDGs, and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

The first section of the paper provides an introduction to the connections between need for inclusive societies, peace building, how SDGs can frame a better place for women in the discourse of peace and the aspirations built around the UN Pact for the future. The second section, considers the contributions of women to peace and tranquility in Africa. The third se examines the normative and institutional framework on global peace and how this is connected with the SDGs commitment by world leaders. The fourth, takes a critical look at the opportunities provided by the adoption of the *2024 Pact of the Future*. The last section is the conclusion and recommendations for sustained political will for inclusive societies.

2.0. CONTEXT AND TRAJECTORY OF WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACE BUILDING IN AFRICA

Wars and armed conflicts have impacted negatively on lives of women and girls. These have also deepened social exclusion as well as increased rural poverty, illiteracy and have exposed more women and girls to life threatening risks, higher maternal mortality and unquantifiable suffering.[250] Women and girls have become refugees and suffer from the effect of this war, losing their bodily integrity to

[247] Shulika Lukong (2016) (n3)

[248] UN Women, 'What we do: Peace and Security' https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures downloaded February 2 8th 2025.

[249] UN Sustainable Development Report 2024, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf downloaded on the 28th of February 2025.

[250] In post war Serra-Leone maternal mortality is very high, likewise in Nigeria (particularly in the north east) higher maternal mortality is recorded due to the insurgencies and conflict.

rape and other forms of sexual violence. They were warriors, spies and suffered debilitating emotional and psychological stress as a result of long and protracted armed conflict .[251] Women have also faced the untold adversities of sexual violence and bodily assault as part of the spoils of war.[252] For example, in Nigeria, over 80% of the people who are in need of humanitarian assistance are women and they face higher risk of sexual abuse and abduction.[253] Over 170 violent conflicts, with impact on about 612 million women and girls, were documented worldwide in 2023 alone.[254] In addition, Africa carries the highest burden of these wars. The conflicts range from gender-based violence and attacks on healthcare facilities to breakdown of educational institutions that disproportionately harm women and girls, with very severe repercussions.

The harsh reality of conflict environments in Africa underscores the critical importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into global peace and security strategies. The crisis of legitimacy of the African state has contributed to the break out of war and the challenge to the ruling powers' authority to security and welfare of their people in accordance to their constitutions.[255] It was in this context that peacebuilding is defined as the holistic strategy, designed to address conflicts in a non-violent manner; which also provides transformative spaces that can lessen possible violence by improving national capacities.[256] The story of conflict in the African regions has shown protraction; for example, a country like Rwanda took a decade to rebuild the ruins of war to be able to guarantee enduring peace after the systemic and genocidal attack on millions of people especially women and girls. The conflict in Sierra-Leone,[257]Liberia,[258] Sudan,[259] Uganda,[260] Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [261] and other parts of Africa[262] underscores the need for addressing these gigantic problems.

As noted by Olayode, in Nigeria and many other places where rape and sexual violence persisted, there is demonstrated urgent need to further improve the situation of women. Women and children needed to be protected from violence, especially in post-conflict situations, where police and other security sector's protection are often wanting. Sustainable peace could not be achieved without protecting the most vulnerable -- women and children.[263] The author argued that although, violent attacks from Boko Haram covered multiple locations, mass human displacements began in 2013 across the North East and parts of the North Central. Bornu, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Zamfara, Yobe, Taraba, Kogi and the FCT, all experienced waves of attacks that brought in its wake, a great number of displaced persons.

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[251] T. Sideris, 'Women and Apartheid; Collective Trauma and Social Reconstruction,' *The Way Supplement* 93 (1998), pp. 80-90.

[252] Karin Koen, 'Claiming Space: Reconfiguring Women's Roles in Post-conflict Situations,' ***Occasional Paper 121 (2006), p. 3.***

[253] See note 9 above

[254] OCHA 15th February 2023 'US 1.3 Billion Needed to Reach 6 Million People in North East Nigeria Humanitarian Assistance'. https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/us13-billion-needed-reach-6-million-people-north-east-nigeria-humanitarian-assistance-2023 downloaded

[255] Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)

[256] Schirch, L & Sewak, M (2005), The Role of Women in Peacebuilding. Issue Paper, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. European Center for Conflict Prevention, Utrecht.

[257] Sierra Leone Civil War 1991-2002

[258] Liberia 1989-1997

[259] Second Sudanese War 1983 to 2005, war still on going in some part of the country

[260] Uganda Bush war 1980-1986, still on going in some part of the country

[261]Amnesty International 2024, Why is the Democratic Republic of Congo Wracked by Conflict https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2024/10/why-is-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-wracked-by-conflict/

[262] Wilson Center' Coups in Africa, Even in ECOWAS' Ambassador Mark A Green, September 2023 https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/coups-africa-even-ecowas In the last four years alone, there have been seven military coups in West and Central Africa.

[263] Olayode K.O and Funam, Y. (2024) 'Battlegrounds and Safe Havens: Gender Dynamics in Conflict, Peace and Security in Nigeria' In Aina Olabisi (Ed.) *Shifting Sands: Nigeria's Evolving Gender Landscape* (Ile-Ife, Obafemi Awolowo University Press), pp. 75-76

The number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria in a 2017 report was put at 1,899,830.[264] Understanding this complexity of war will help in post-conflict analyses and peace building proposals, which this chapter hopes to contribute. The gender implication of conflict has been at the center of the broader discourse on peace building and this has shaped the views of scholars, and feminist theorists on how to deconstruct power hierarchies that wedge throughout the society, making it difficult for women to enjoy internal and external peace even after conflict.[265]

As noted by scholars, the general opinion of peacebuilding is presented as a double-edged sword, towering on the challenges and successes.[266] Women's agency have been strong historically, playing very critical roles at various levels. However, women were also actors in wars, masterminds and fighters, with some supplying ammunitions, while others also instigated gender-based violence.[267] Women's role in Africa has been linked to pre-colonial ambiance; an oddity that changed with the dawn of colonialism.[268] The argument is that colonialism contributed immensely to the exclusion of women in decision making and subsequent marginalization in formal peace processes.[269] Established history of women in Africa[270] shows that they were the bedrock of stability in communities and contributed to the growth and development of their socio-cultural heritage, leading peace and harmony in their spaces of influence. To further affirm their roles, essentialist feminist still believe that women's innate abilities propel them as peace loving and put them at critical positions to peace building.[271]

Despite women's recognized role in communities and households as peace makers, and even though their vulnerability to insecurity and conflict is usually highlighted, women's actual and potential roles in peace building, conflict resolution and disaster management are often overlooked. The apparent marginalization of women on the peace negotiation table and the complexity arising as a result of conflict led to the adoption of the UN Resolution 1325[272] and 1820[273]. These resolutions highlight the need to both exploit women and girls' potential as peace and security agents and address the unique vulnerabilities they suffer in conflict.

In 2002 the UN adopted National Action Plan (NAP)[274] for effective implementation of UNSCR 1325. NAP is been implemented in several countries.[275] The integration of the National Action Plans into peace projects is a significant step for peace agenda.

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[264] International Organization for Migration (IOM) DTM Nigeria. (2017). *Nigeria—Round XIV Report*. https://drive.google.com/file/ /0B3CEVcVlpFxORmU4TDlLcEtBemM/view / International

[265] Goldstein J (2001) War and Gender , Cambridge University Press, see also Herbert S (2014) Conflict Analysis of Liberia, Government of Liberia /UN Joint Program on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2011) See also Stop Rape Now http://stoprapenow.org/uploads/features/SGBVemail.pdf downloaded on the 20 December 2024

[266] Olayode K.O and Funam, Y. (2024) 'Battlegrounds and Safe Havens: Gender Dynamics in Conflict, Peace and Security in Nigeria' In Aina Olabisi (Ed.) *Shifting Sands: Nigeria's Evolving Gender Landscape* (Ile-Ife, Obafemi Awolowo University Press), pp. 75-76

[267] The Prosecutor V Pauline Nyiramasuhuko; ICTR -97-21-T https://ucr.irmct.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Decision/NotIndexable/ICTR-98-42/MSC20581R0000548122.PDF

[268] St Clair's W. (1994) Imperialism and Traditional African Culture, Cambridge University Press cited Luckong (n9)

[269] Ibid.

[270] Ibid. Luckong (n6)

[271] Porter, Elisabeth (2003) 'Women, political decision-making, and peace-building', *Global Change, Peace & Security* 15(3): 245 Potter M (2004) Women Civil Society and Peace Building Paths to Pace through the Empowerment of Women . Belfast Training for Women Network p 4 in Luckong (n9)

[272] UN Security Council, Res. S/Res/1325/2000, 31 October 2000 (hereinafter referred to as UNSCR 1325)

[273] UN Security Council, Res. S/1820/2008, 19 June 2008 (hereinafter referred to as UNSCR 1325)

[274] Security Council 'Statement by the President of the Security Council att the 4641st meeting of the Security Council, held on 31 October 2002' S/PRST/2002/32

[275] Women International League for Peace and Freedom' National Action Plan (NAPs) www.peacewomen.org/naps/list-of- *downloaded 24 Dec 2024*

3.0 THE NEXUS BETWEEN WOMEN'S ROLE AND THE EXISITNG NORMS IN PROMOTING PEACE BUILDING.

Researches have questioned the role of human rights norms and laws to secure women's rights to political participation and voice. Feminist analysis of transitional justice processes, argue about the potency of laws to guarantee women's right. Since the state is the custodian of the law and the regulator of international treaties, feminist's arguments also question the ability of the state to provide solutions to injustices experienced by women during conflicts[276]. These arguments seem to be in line with Hillary Charlesworth and other feminist writers questioning the role of the UN in providing spaces for women to exercise their rights and ensuring state compliance in this regard. As such, it is critical in analyzing the effectiveness of the WPS Agenda that gender justice practitioners need to catechize the framework of law and analyze whether the state lacks the legitimacy to fulfill its promise on the norms. UNSCR 1325, placed its preamble in the assertion of the United Nations' commitment and willingness to effectively implement the Beijing Declarations[277] and other United Nations resolution documents.[278] Furthermore, UNSCR 1325 recognizes the burden women and children carry in war and the implications of an enduring peace, by bringing women on the negotiation in ensuring gender equality.[279]

There are four pillars enshrined in the UNSCR Resolution 1325: prevention, participation, protection and relief and recovery. Furthermore, the resolution amplifies the roles of women in preventing armed conflict; underscores their voice in peacebuilding negotiations; safeguard their rights where there is break out of war and conflict; and addresses women's needs during post-conflict reconstruction. The overarching approach of gender balance and gender mainstreaming has been questioned as fluid and lacks much practical examples to show that state actors have supported much participation of women in peacebuilding.[280]

Subsequent resolutions have expanded on Resolution 1325's pillars, addressing persistent gaps and emerging challenges. These includes: Resolution 1889 (2009) advocating for measurable progress through indicators and women's inclusion in all stages of peacebuilding; Resolution 2122 (2013), identifying the barriers to implementation and calls for a gender-responsive approach to peacekeeping and post-conflict recovery; Resolution 2242 (2015), which links the WPS agenda to counter-terrorism efforts, highlighting women's roles in preventing violent extremism; Resolution 2493 (2019, that demands full implementation of all WPS resolutions, emphasizing women's participation in peace processes. In addition, several resolutions have focused on sexual violence as both a weapon of war and a violation of international peace and security: Resolution 1820 (2008 recognizes rape as a potential war crime and an act of genocide; Resolution 1888 (2009) calls for mechanisms to address and monitor sexual violence; and Resolution 2467 (2019), which advocates survivor-centered approaches to combating sexual violence. These resolutions acknowledge the need for accountability and survivor-focused solutions, underscoring the importance of justice systems in addressing conflict atrocities.

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[276] Dianne Otto, 'The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International law over the Last Decade', *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2 (2009); also, UN Security Council, 4208th mtg. at 24, UN Doc. S/PV .4208 October 24 2000, see also Scully, P. 2009, 'Enlightened Practice? Foucault, Western Feminism and Gender-based Violence', paper presented at gender violence and gender justice conference, Emory University, Atlanta, May.

[277] United Nations Specialized Conferences, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, -, United Nations, 27 October 1995, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/un/1995/en/73680 [accessed 28 December 2024]

[278] Specific reference was made to the outcome document of the twenty-third special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled 'Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty First Century' A/S/-23/10/REV.1)

[279] See the preamble to the UNSCR 1325.

[280] Christine Chinkin and Hilary Charlesworth, 'Building Women into Peace: The International Legal Framework' *Third World Quarterly* 27:5 (2006), pp. 937-957.

3.1 Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16

One of the ground breaking achievement of the SDGs goals is the inclusion of the stand-alone goal focusing on fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies[281]. SDG 16 seeks to "*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*"[282]

In the wake of developing the SDGs, there were other global development agreements which are expected to be complimentary to its achievement. [283] All the SDGs are linked and interconnected. This is because the main objective of the 2030 Agenda is to be inclusive, holistic, and globally applicable. These goals incorporate three dimensions of the agenda which includes society, environment, and the economy, which are multifaceted and incorporative. Inclusion is very critical in determining the efficiency of the SDGs because it can have a direct impact on the outcomes of other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, social, economic and environmental development play a vital role in creating the conditions necessary for peace, justice and inclusion.

Furthermore, the uniqueness of SDG 16+ resonates in the goal being one, which ensures that the foundational objectives of "leaving no one behind" and "reaching the furthest behind first" are upheld.[284] Thus peace, justice and inclusion, remain the conduit pipe for the achievement of other SDGs; without which other goals might be impossible. While fostering the active participation of women and inclusive societies, the nexus between goals 5 and 16 of the SDGs shows some significant interconnectedness. SDG 5 which is gender equality, focuses on eradicating discrimination and ending violence against women and girls; and ending harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, sexual exploitation and assaults., These align with the SDG 16 which aims at promoting equal access to justice and reducing violence, most especially against women and girls. These goals work together to create a safer environment which enables women to participate without hindrances and barriers.

Furthermore, while goal 5 majorly promotes women's full political and economic participation, SDG 16 places emphasis on the inclusiveness and participatory decision making at all levels. These goals (SDG 5 and 16) demonstrate the relevance of empowering women through leadership and decision making. The synergy in the goals ensures that the contributions of women are well recognized and valued and also ensures that peace processes governance are gender-responsive[285].

In strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, SDG 5 expects that institutional and structural reforms will provide women with equal rights to resources, property, and inheritance. This complement SDG 16's emphasis on building effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. These measures create systems that uphold women's rights, enhance their economic empowerment, and encourage their active engagement in society. Inclusion is central to women's role in peacebuilding, and failure to do so will impact expected outcomes. Resolution 1325 and other WPS agenda emphasize on participation and inclusion, by laying emphasis on recovery, which cannot be achieved without social, economic support, strong institutions and sustained political will as necessity for peaceful co-existence.[286]

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[281] UN General Assembly, transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, 21 October 2015, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2015/en/111816 [accessed 27 December 2024]

[282] Ibid SDGs, 16 See UN General Assembly above

[283]Preamble "the interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized."

[284] The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda the latter which provides a global framework for financing sustainable development.

[285]S. Amulya Jeevanasai et all 'Shades & shines of gender equality with respect to sustainable development goals (SDGs): The environmental performance perspectives' https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S277280992300059X downloaded 27th December 2024

[286]IDLO' Gender and the Rule of Law; Synergies between SDG 5 &16 https://www.idlo.int/fr/news/highlights/gender-and-rule-law-synergies-between-sdg-5-and-16 , downloaded 28 February 2025

The need for a human rights approach to development is also important. UNSCR 1325 equally emphasizes protection, voice and participation. Human-rights based approach to development is founded on the principles of inclusivity, participation, rule of law, accountability and respect for human rights all key elements of SDG 16+[287]. However, Goal 16 supports the following advantage which includes; promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. As noted by a UN Report, there has been a retrogression in a bid to address the ongoing and new violent conflicts around the world and the global path to peace is threatened [288]. The report shows that '*the year 2022 witnessed more than 50 per cent increase in conflict-related civilian deaths – the first since the adoption of Agenda 2030 – largely due to the war in Ukraine.*'[289] While the role of peace as a precondition for societal development cannot be over emphasized, violence and instability continue to threaten peace. Furthermore, virile justice system is critical to sustainable peace as discriminatory laws and ineffective justice systems are threats to peaceful societies and full human rights enjoyment.[290] The normalization of violence extends beyond the duration of conflicts into the post-conflict period, perpetuating harmful societal norms that obstruct efforts to establish lasting peace. To address these complex challenges, peacebuilding efforts must focus on gender-sensitive principles such as justice, protection, and participation.

Without any doubt, there has been progress towards the attainment of peace and women have played prominent roles in this regard. Some of these visible roles have been documented. For example, initiatives such as the Elsie Initiative, which has advanced women's participation in peacekeeping missions, and focused campaigns to boost women's representation in national parliaments and the court are examples of efforts to rectify these inequities. However, as of 2024, only 27% of legislative seats were held by women globally, and their representation was lower in areas impacted by violence. In Africa, Rwanda towered above other countries, in women's representation in post-conflict society, dwarfing other countries of comparable post conflict experiences in the world with over 68% women in parliament.

3.2. Women's Contribution to peace processes

Across conflict-affected regions, women's active involvement in peacebuilding and negotiation processes has proven essential for fostering stability and long-lasting peace. The vital role that women play in resolving conflict and also in shaping the future of their communities and nations demonstrate their efforts in promoting peace. From grassroots mediation initiatives to formal peace agreements, women have been at the forefront of efforts to address key issues such as violence, land disputes, and political reconciliation.[291] This involvement helped in managing intercommunal tensions and contributed to local peacebuilding efforts. For example, in Burundi, nationwide network of 516 women mediators dealt with over 14,000 conflicts, including political, land-related issues, youth-related issues, and domestic violence between 2016 and 2018.[292] Community dialogues on peace and security, sexual and gender-based violence were organized by them as well as economic recovery, effectively preventing violence at the local level. Women in South Sudan played a key role in peace negotiations,

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[287] United Nations -Thematic Paper on the contribution of Human Rights to peace building and sustaining Peace https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/1._ohchr_thematic_paper_on_the_contribution_of_hr_to_sp_and_recommendations.pdf. Downloaded 28 February 2025

[288] See UN SDGs Report 2004, supra

[289] Ibid.

[290] UN WOMEN *'Women and the SDG 16 Peace Justice Strong Institutions'* https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-16-peace-justice-strong-institutions downloaded 28th February 2025

[291] UN Women. (2019). *Increasing women's participation in mediation processes: What roles for the United Nations, regional organizations, and member states?* UN Women. Retrieved Feb 28 2025, from https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Increasing-womens-participation-in-mediation-processes-en.pdf

[292] Global Acceleration Instrument - Pilot Project -Women for Peace and Dialogues in Burundi- A Key Role in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediator http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Burundi%20Brief%20September%202016.pdf downloaded Feb 28th 2025

with five female representatives who participates in high-level talks and seven women signing the Revitalized Agreement on Conflict Resolution in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018.[293] The resilience demonstrated by Liberian women at the end of the war in 2003, is remarkable. Through social networking and effective organizing; women's contribution in the country have been institutionalized. Various stakeholders through women led organizations have continued to play leading role in post conflict reconstruction and stability in Liberia. One of the notable organization's Women. In Peace Network (WIPNET) was founded by a Noble Peace Laurate and the recognition of its founder in 2011 was viable evidence of their continued role in peace building in Liberia.[294] The adoption of the National Action Plan and the continued reforms in the country, have shown the willingness to ensure women's participation and representation at the highest levels. In the neighboring, Sierra Leone, the post conflict passage of gender laws and the parity law for women in local government are evidence of willingness for more participation of women in post conflict recovery.[295]

With over 60% women in Rwanda's Parliament, the country has demonstrated the importance of women's participation.[296] Without any doubt, this has demonstrated how women can participate effectively in decision making. The increased number of women to 6o%, is a testimony of the impact of women and role in ensuring stability in the state. Through local networks, women have led reconciliation, local negotiations, empowerment and ensure grassroot women participation in decision making.[297] Despite the above contributions of women to peacebuilding, there are several challenges affecting the realization of the SDG16+ framework. According to the 2019 SDG Report, some of these challenges include: lack of sustained political will and concrete commitments to ensuring the achievement of the goals; shrinking civic space across the globe, particularly to enable women rights organizations to lead and hold government accountable; lack of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data; financial support for SDG16+ is severely lacking, and the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.[298] Like other SDGs, goal 16 has made very marginal leap, leaving the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the balance.

In terms of participation, the Gender Snapshot of the SDG 2024 report shows that war and conflict impact on the physical and mental health of women. For example, facts and figure show that 1.2 million pregnant women are expected to suffer malnutrition as a result of the conflict and that child marriage is more prevalent in conflict setting at 14.4% higher than in non- conflict setting; global maternal mortality ratio dropped by 34% 2000 to 2020 yet 800 women die every day due to preventable child birth and related causes[299]. Furthermore, rising conflict impairs women and girls and ignites sexual violence and other abuses against women.

Conflicts also impose intense psychological stress on women and girls. Women in countries affected by conflcits reported poor mental health, depression, sleep issues, anxiety and nightmares. Among Ukrainian refugee mothers in Poland, over 60 per cent claimed to have suffered severe distress[300].

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[293] UN Women (2019) (n51)
[294] Herbert S (2014), Conflict Analysis of Liberia, Birmingham, UK: GSDRC University of Birmingham
[295] Bah, M.S., 2011. Sierra Leone: opportunities, challenges and lessons learnt for women. *Women and Security Governance in Africa*, p.89.
[296] IPU, 'Women in parliaments: World classification', 1 January 2017, http://www.ipu.org/ WMN-e/classif.htm, accessed 27 February 2025.
[297] Mutamba J and Izabiliza J (2005) The role of Women in Reconciliaition and Peace Building in Rwanda; Ten years after Genocide (1994-2004-Contributions and Challenges, Way Forward.)
[298] UNSDGs Report 2024
[299] Gender Snapshot (2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2024/GenderSnapshot2024.pdf downloaded 28th February 2025
[300] ibid

Addressing systemic inequalities in conflict and post-conflict settings is critical to the attainment of the SDGs. Through SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), targets on education, health, justice, gender-sensitive justice systems, reparations, and support for survivors of violence will contribute to inclusive recovery and stability. Women continue to be underrepresented in peace processes, the percentage of women negotiators in UN-led or co-led peace procedures fell from 23% in 2020 to just 16% in 2022. Negotiation teams for wars in Sudan, Yemen, the Balkans, Ethiopia, and Myanmar did not include any women. Women only came close to equality in government and rebel negotiating teams in Colombia. Only one of the 18 peace accords signed in 2022 was signed by a woman. In peacekeeping operations, women make up only 15.8% of the police and 6.5% of the military.[301]

Women's leadership in decision making, peacekeeping and countering violent extremism will foster the desired trust and reduce conflict-related misconduct. Efficient and effective strategies for mobilizing resources for sustainable development, funding gender equality initiatives and women's organizations will contribute immensely to the attainment of peace.

4.0. TOWARDS THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

In September 2024, the UN and other stakeholders gathered in New-York for the Summit of the Future, a post-covid idea mooted in 2021 to address some of the 21st century challenges. Post 2020, the UN Developed the report 'Our Common Agenda'[302], with policy briefs to guide understanding of the key critical areas identified to support the new global pathway. The brief analyses the effectiveness of the SDGs and presents 12 commitments for the protection of integrity and more inclusive and equitable world in preparation for the 2024 Summit.[303] The Policy Brief specifically proposes a new agenda for peace through a forward- looking approach to prevention of conflicts both traditional and potential new domains. It identifies 12 Actions to address the interlinked multidimensional drivers of violence and insecurity.

Action 4 on prevention on violence and sustaining peace applied a gender mainstreaming approach to conflict prevention, demanding that member states implement national prevention strategies and align funding mechanism towards gender mainstreaming in peace building.[304] In countries where there are national laws to support peace building, lack of resources continues to impact negatively on the protection of women from violence or recovery. Investment in conflict prevention will go a long way towards eradication of violence against women. It will also strengthen peace education, improved knowledge, early warnings and women's confidence to report violence or threats of violence. Furthermore, Action 5 brings to fore the intricacies in gender power dynamics and the need for full participation and representation of women as a prerequisite for addressing peace.

Action 6 addresses the linkage between peace and climate change as women have had to suffer from the effect of climate change. In the Sahel region, there are evidence of drought and other effect of climate change on women's health.[305] Other areas covered by the policy briefs include the need for partnership in peace operations peace enforcement, support for African Union and sub regional peace initiative. Africa is threatened by undemocratic governments and the rise in coups are potentials for violence and threats to peace.[306] Others include preventing the weaponization of emerging domain (Action11) on Artificial intelligence. There must also be a conscious effort in strengthening internal governance to enable the UN effectively play the role of peace governance. Policy 9 on the 'New Agenda for Peace' is wide and holistic; however, there must be a deliberate attempt to ensure gender integration in all the proposed actions., The fact that there is no specific mention of how gender dynamic will be operationalized, may also become a problem for its implementation. The opening statement of each brief would have been better positioned to emphasis the role that women will play in each of the

[301] Ibid.
[302] *UN Secretary General Report 'Our Common Agenda'* https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/ downloaded on the 27th December 2024
[303] Ibid.
[304] Action 4; Policy Brief 9 'Our Common Agenda' https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/policy-briefs
[305] Ibid Action 6
[306] Ibid Policy Brief

actions proposed. Nevertheless, the policy brief provides a good start for enthronement of global peace and inclusive societies.

The policy briefs no doubt shaped the outcome of the September 2024 Summit for the Future. The Summit was a pathway to a brighter future, for a dignifying humanity, peaceful equal and just. The Pact for the Future[307] commits itself to actions that were complimentary to 'Our Common Agenda'. The Pact developed 56 Actions, affirmed gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as an essential prerequisite. It provides a forward-looking, bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative agenda that will lead the world towards the achievement of the 2030 SDG Agenda. The Pact is expected to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and address the failures of the past[308]. The Pact amongst other things placed the eradication of poverty and sustenance of economic growth, peace and security, climate and global governance as priorities towards the achievement of the SDGs. To this end, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is seen as a crucial contribution to progress across all the SDGs. Like Our Common Agenda, the Pact demanded for additional funding and also that member states ensure more and sustained political will towards achieving these lofty ideas.[309] In conflict-affected countries with legislated gender quotas, women's membership in parliaments averaged 25%, compared to 15% in countries without such quotas.[310]

The Pact recognizes the need for human rights approach for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, thus reaffirming the commitment to international law and other UN treaties in order to strengthen accountabilities and end impunity as provided in the challenges of new world order and the role of technology in international crimes (Action 13).[311] Efforts to redress injustice and reduce inequalities will build peace between countries, promote tolerance, embrace diversity and address all forms of discrimination in contemporary forms (Action 14).[312] The Pact equivocally asserts that none of the goals can be achieved without inclusion and economic emancipation of women. The Pact recognizes the contribution of Beijing Plan for Action.

However, the Pact has been criticized as vague, fluid and of language that is not firm and not capable of ensuring accountability. Gender mainstreaming in peace and security should have been integrated in the actions relating to peace and security. The call for participation and representation is important but gender still remains as a stand-alone and should have been integrated into all the actions.

5.0. CONCLUSION

A holistic approach to addressing the root causes of conflict will benefit the implementation of the UN Pact for the Future. The role of women in conflict prevention, as highlighted by UNSC Resolution 1325, is vital. Women's involvement in early warning systems, such as those seen in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, proves invaluable due to their access to crucial information through daily activities and local visibility. Moreover, empowering women in these roles can significantly enhance the ability of peacekeepers to identify and address emerging conflicts before they escalate[313]. Furthermore, member states of the UN should invest resources on prevention, protection, participation and recovery. The National Action Plan will remain a rhetoric without adequate funding investment to gender equality.

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[307] United Nations Summit of the Future https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future downloaded on the 24th of February 2024

[308] Ibid.

[309] Ibid

[310] UN Women Peace and Security; Facts and Figure https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures downloaded on the 24th of February 2025

[311] Action 13 UN Pact of the Future (n67) above

[312] Action 14 UN Pact of the Future (n67) above

[313] Wright, H., & Lyytikäinen, M. E. (2014). Gender and conflict early warning: Results of a literature review on integrating gender perspectives into conflict early warning systems. Retrieved February 28, 2025 from https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/publications/810-gender-and-conflict-early-warning