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# Foreword

During the 1990s at least 10 Commonwealth countries were engaged in armed conflict or war, the impacts of which particularly affected women and girls. Peace agreements were eventually reached in many of these countries, with women playing a critical role in bringing the conflicts to an end. In recognition of both war's adverse effects on women and women's important contributions to peace and security globally, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1325 in 2000. UNSCR 1325 urges governments not only to protect women from all forms of violence during armed conflict but also to support women's participation at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict as well as expand their role in peacekeeping operations. It enjoins member states to develop national action plans (NAPs) or other national-level strategies to facilitate implementation of the resolution.

The Commonwealth is committed to meeting international obligations including UNSCR 1325 (and subsequent UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 calls on governments to promote women's full, equal and effective participation at all levels and stages of peace-building processes including formal and informal negotiations and agreements. It encourages the mainstreaming of gender equality into the training of peacekeepers, disciplined forces and law enforcement personnel to ensure appropriate codes of conduct. It also advocates for the implementation and monitoring of UNSCR 1325 through the adoption of NAPs in Commonwealth member states.

The political and democratic situation of member states in conflict and post-conflict settings is reviewed through the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG). Since its creation by Commonwealth Heads of Government in November 1995, CMAG has reviewed as part of its agenda: Belize, Fiji, The Gambia, Guyana, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands and Zimbabwe, and has made recommendations for appropriate intervention and action. In addition, the Commonwealth Secretary-General has deployed Special Envoys for preventive democracy and conflict resolution through and the Eminent Persons Group as reflected in the 1991 Harare

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Declaration, the 2009 Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation on Commonwealth Values and Principles and other key documents.

The participation of women in conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-keeping, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction has expanded across the Commonwealth. Some 28 Commonwealth countries have contributed troops to peacekeeping and peace-building operations around the world, among which Nigeria ranks the highest in contributing female troops followed by Ghana, South Africa, Bangladesh and Rwanda. In 2007 India deployed the first all-women contingent – a Formed Police Unit – to serve in the UN operation in Liberia. Since then three more all-female UN police units have been deployed from Commonwealth countries: Bangladeshi in Haiti, Samoan in Timor-Leste and Rwandan in Sudan.

At least 33 Commonwealth countries have adopted national gender policies for women's equality. Other countries – including Botswana, Grenada and the Maldives – have drafted national gender policies that are awaiting adoption, while most countries in the Pacific region have just commenced the process. Some countries have introduced other equality measures; for example, Sri Lanka has a Citizenship (Amendment) Act that guarantees equal rights for women and men. Yet only 5 of the 33 countries worldwide that have developed NAPs on UNSCR 1325 are in the Commonwealth: Canada, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Kingdom (though others, such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, are in the process of doing so). This calls for more pointed action particularly as there is little evidence of women's increased participation in formal peace-related negotiations and decision-making committees or bodies.

This book aims to contribute to ongoing efforts on peace management. It elaborates women's engagement in peace and security and their effective contributions to conflict resolution and peace-building processes. It further examines women's efforts in the adoption of NAPs across Commonwealth countries and provides case studies from Commonwealth countries that have adopted NAPs. In addition, it uses paragraphs taken from UNSCR 1325 to trace the progress that selected countries have made in attaining the resolution's goals.

Ultimately, the adoption of NAPs fosters the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming and equitable practices at all decision-making levels and helps states – whether they are affected by conflict or not – to fully co-ordinate national efforts to meet the requirements of UNSCR 1325. Robust implementation would entail integration of UNSCR 1325 into national policies and training programmes if its objectives of prevention, participation, protection and relief and recovery are to be attained. Monitoring and evaluation in accordance with key indicators identified in the NAPs themselves is critical and penalties for non-compliance should be regulated and made effective through all structures and systems of governance, at all levels and across all sectors. Commitment to budget allocations is essential in making this a reality.

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