

**Statement of Kelley E. Currie
Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues
at the U.S. Department of State
House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on National Security
"Empowering Women and Girls and Promoting International Security."**

Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Grothman, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to highlight the many successes the United States has achieved since the passage of the bipartisan Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, and how the United States continues to lead the effort to empower women worldwide. I would also like to take a moment to thank the Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Caucus, especially its co-chairs Congresswoman Frankel and Congressman Waltz, for their leadership on this important issue, and for ensuring the empowerment of women as agents of change remains front and center in Congress.

Women, Peace, and Security is an initiative the Trump Administration takes very seriously. The Department of State has made a commitment to not only implement Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) throughout our foreign policy, but to remain the global leader in empowering women.

Twenty years ago this October, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1325, and laid the groundwork to challenge the world to recognize the importance of women's meaningful participation in global security and peace efforts, or put another way, have a meaningful seat at the table. We have led the charge on this effort since UNSC Resolution 1325, and in 2017, the United States became the first country in the world to pass national legislation formalizing our commitments to Women, Peace, and Security. The Women, Peace, and Security Act was passed by the Senate on August 3, 2017, then unanimously by this body, the House of Representatives, on September 25, 2017, and President Trump signed the legislation into law on October 6, 2017. This transformative legislation made the United States the first – and still the only – country in the world to have a comprehensive Women, Peace, and Security law.

In 2019, the United States reaffirmed our commitment with the release of the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security. This whole-of-government approach charged the four leading federal departments and agencies on Women, Peace, and Security, to develop implementation plans that were mission-specific, innovative, and, perhaps most important, measurable.

Last month, the Department of State released its Women, Peace, and Security Implementation Plan, which provides a roadmap to achieve measurable progress by 2023. Through an intensive, Department-wide process, the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues worked with the Secretary's Office of Policy Planning to establish priorities, identify core competencies, develop measurable outcomes, and establish a feedback loop to consistently monitor and evaluate progress to adjust when and where necessary to improve our efforts, programs, and trainings.

Thanks to President Trump and Congress, as we head into the 20th Anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325, the United States remains the world's leading voice for women's empowerment – politically, economically, and socially. Other nations routinely turn to the United States for advice and counsel on how they too can effectively and productively integrate Women, Peace, and Security priorities into their own plans and strategies.

The Department of State is uniquely positioned to reinforce America's global leadership in Women, Peace, and Security in four key areas: policy, diplomacy, partnerships, and innovative programs. Through

the Department's global presence, we have a distinct comparative structural advantage to engage partners on the ground through our actions with our nearly 300 Embassies, Consulates, and diplomatic missions around the world, as well as here in Washington.

In particular, our efforts are laser-focused on countries currently experiencing armed conflict, violent extremism, or gross, systemic abuses of women and girls, as well as those nations emerging from conflict and those most at risk of abuse. The Department also monitors, and engages with, countries with a history of atrocity or those with a pattern of inflicting systemic violence against women, including sexual violence.

The Department's Women, Peace, and Security agenda is at work in over 30 countries in conjunction with more than 10 regional and international organizations. Here at home, the Department offers nearly 50 training programs to ensure Department of State personnel have the tools they need to bring Women, Peace, and Security into U.S. diplomacy.

Last month, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and United States Agency for International Development presented our implementation plans for Women, Peace, and Security to the House and Senate Committees on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations, Armed Services, and Appropriations. We have moved from strategy to action, and as noted above, the Department of State has already taken concrete steps to integrate Women, Peace, and Security throughout our foreign policy apparatus to transform how the Department approaches matters of peace and security.

To summarize that briefing, over the last three years since the enactment of the Women, Peace, and Security Act, the Department of State has developed or updated 47 internal training programs to include Women, Peace, and Security principles. These programs have reached 2,426 Department of State personnel. In addition, specific in-country trainings were developed to assist on-the-ground Women, Peace, and Security efforts to include at our Embassies in Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Morocco. These trainings were highly focused to build capacity, provide program design and evaluation through a gender lens, and work hand-in-hand with programs developed in Washington.

As also noted in June's briefing, the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues has partnered with the Foreign Service Institute to incorporate Women, Peace, and Security into 24 existing training courses. Our office works across Department bureaus to support their efforts to weave Women, Peace, and Security into their engagement worldwide.

These efforts have equated to the Department dedicating approximately \$23 million over the past two fiscal years to promote integration of Women, Peace, and Security into their daily work. These funds have supported activities such as: higher education scholarships for women in conflict zones, recruitment, retention, and training of female Pakistani police; emphasizing women's roles in countering violent extremism; and strengthening women's participation in justice systems throughout Central America, just to name a few examples. The Department's work has been in partnership with the interagency, our allies and partners, and undertaken in extensive consultation with women's groups, civil society organizations, and local implementing partners.

I would like to highlight one specific example of Women, Peace, and Security in action that demonstrates America's leadership on this issue, as well as tangible results of U.S. engagement, led by the Department of State: Afghanistan.

All of us recognize how much is at stake if women are not able to participate meaningfully at the negotiating table in Afghanistan. Now – more than ever – women’s voices must be heard, to define not only their own futures, but the future of their nation.

The status of women and girls is a bellwether for stability in Afghanistan. As such, protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls and building on the accomplishments to date is an imperative, not just for their benefit, but for the prosperity and security for all Afghans.

Afghanistan still has far to go on women’s meaningful inclusion in decision-making and political processes. But the Afghan government took an important step earlier this month in announcing that it will appoint one female deputy governor in each of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. Seven are already in place.

Following sustained U.S. engagement, today we can also report that four women have been named to the government’s negotiation team in intra-Afghan negotiations, representing nearly 20 percent of the negotiating team.

And finally, 25 Afghan women who were identified last year as influencers and potential participants in negotiations, have participated in U.S.-funded training intended to develop a cadre of female senior officials skilled in top-level negotiations.

Here at home, the Department of State has sponsored Afghan women to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program, and I and many of my counterparts meet with Afghan leaders, businesswomen, and women’s rights activists on a regular basis. It is this consistency, support, and use of U.S. diplomacy that will change for the better the outcome regarding peace and security in Afghanistan. I also represent the Department of State on the U.S.–Afghan Women’s Council, one of our oldest and most successful public-private partnerships.

I would like to end with one final thought, and that is regarding the malign influence we are seeing from Russia and the People’s Republic of China through the United Nations and other international organizations. The United States remains strongly committed to prevent sexual violence in conflict, hold perpetrators accountable, and support survivors. The U.S. has been the leading supporter of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict since its inception, both politically and financially. Our voluntary contributions to that office have advanced the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Burma, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name recent efforts. I have personally worked with Special Representative to the Secretary-General Pramila Patten over the past three years to advance the remarkable work of her office. By contrast, malign actors threaten global peace and security by weakening international norms and manipulating legitimate concerns about violent extremism to justify denial of human rights. We will continue to fight these influences by empowering women and girls worldwide, and promoting and protecting the human rights and dignity of all.

Diplomacy in the 21st century demands effective, creative, and innovative foreign policy that spurs diversity of thought and inclusive, durable solutions. Women, Peace, and Security is an example of how the United States has adapted to this imperative. We are building a strong foundation for worldwide consensus, including through effective multilateral fora, to advance genuine, sustainable, and prosperous opportunities for women. While we may not always agree on every aspect of the implementation of this agenda, we must focus on the critical work we can do together to build effective initiatives that yield meaningful results. The United States will continue to be a champion for women and human rights worldwide. It is in support of these foundational principles, that together, we have the opportunity to change the futures of millions of women around the world.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions you may have.