Third Meeting of the Study Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

June 22 & 23, 2022 (North America) | June 23 & 24, 2022 (Oceania/Asia)

The third meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on WPS, held on June 23-24, 2022, was attended by 29 individuals representing CSCAP member committees from Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, New Zealand, the Philippines, the United States, and Vietnam. Individuals from academia and research institutes also joined the discussion. The meeting was structured into two meetings with two sessions each. The key findings from this meeting are described below.

CSCAP WPS Study Group Priorities & Working toward a CSCAP Memo
During two sessions, "Working toward a CSCAP Memo and Status of a regional WPS action plan," and "Discussion of CSCAP WPS Study Group priorities," the co-Chairs referred to previous key findings (Meeting 1 & Meeting 2), and looked at the original Study Group Objectives (Appendix 1), progress made, and how they would fit into a CSCAP Memo to ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The findings were as follows:

- **Objective 1:** Work has not yet begun at the CSCAP level. However, USCSCAP, through Pacific Forum International, has developed a model Event Gender Tracker to foster gender diversity.

- **Objective 2:** The group has worked to raise awareness of WPS principles and practices with CSCAP members through previous meetings and will work on concrete policy recommendations.

- **Objective 3:** Following this third meeting, the group will refine priorities and draft a Memo to feed into ARF's goals for advancing WPS in the Asia-Pacific.

- **Objective 4:** CSCAP Member Committees have presented on country-specific WPS efforts, advantages/disadvantages to NAP adoption and non-NAP approaches, and prospects for a Regional Action Plan. Publishing previous findings was recommended.

- **Objective 5:** USCSAP member Pacific Forum createda directory of WPS-focused CSOs, NGOs, and NextGen peacebuilders and a Women Experts Directory. Supporting Next Generation WPS leaders by recruiting new women NextGen CSCAP members and hosting a panel of young WPS leaders at a future CSCAP general meeting was also mooted.

- **Objective 6:** The group noted that bridging differences between defence and foreign ministry approaches to WPS is overly ambitious but CSCAP could recommend member states address disconnects between ministries and women's groups.

- **Objective 7:** This objective has not yet been developed. The Study Group could recommend: collecting sex-segregated data mapping WPS NAPs and good practice for

mutual learning; harmonizing the Economic and Community Pillars with with WPS principles and UNSC Resolutions championed by members.

- **Objective 8:** Papers to be published by session speakers and other member committee representatives in popular outlets on strategic topics.
- **Objective 9:** During the fourth meeting, the Study Group will draft a memo with recommendations for the ARF process.

Status of a Regional WPS Action Plan

The group received an update from an ASEAN Secretariat representative on progress made toward the development of an ASEAN regional plan of action (RPA) with the goal of submitting the RPA to leaders in September 2022 and implementation in 2023. The draft has several innovative features that align with the CSCAP WPS Study Group's own findings, including a recognition of the complexities of marginalization and intersectionality; an attempt to adopt a survivor-centered approach; clear attention given to unpaid care work; an emphasis on the need for men to be involved in WPS work; and a recognition of how WPS relates to other global challenges, including COVID-19, climate change, extremism, human trafficking, and cybersecurity.

Thematic Discussion on Sustainable WPS Implementation

In Session 3, the group had a chance to learn more about previously identified issues of special relevance to this Study Group. On "Disaster management," it was noted that good data is necessary for understanding challenges and for operationalizing WPS implementation. An invited speaker from the Pacific Disaster Center (PDC), with support from the US government, noted that the PDC has developed a framework for retrieving and analyzing information to understand how challenges across the WPS spectrum can be managed with resourcing and policy decision-making strategies.

A presentation on WPS and "Countering terrorism" offered insights into the need to adopt an intersectional lens in understanding gender issues in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), remembering each woman is a unique single entity, and that there is a great diversity of women involved in violent extremism (VE). If the security sector ignores gender, they will not see the ways in which women are implicated in terrorist acts. Hearing from civil society organizations (CSOs) is of particular importance in P/CVE.

The "Managing digitalization/cybersecurity" presentation provided valuable updates on the state of the gendered digital divide and strategies for applying the WPS agenda to challenges in cybersecurity and digital governance. Women often experience misogynistic hate speech; online violence spreading to real-life violence; data breaches that impact privacy (on sexual and reproductive health, human rights, dignity, and self-development); and discrimination. Women in security fields need to be empowered, receive training on WPS awareness, and be involved in policymaking and the production of technologies whilst more should be done to educate law enforcement on gendered forensics and evidence collection. Better programs for increasing digital literacy on sexual and gender-based violence and cyberdiplomacy should be developed and tech companies engaged to develop better prevention mechanisms.

Finally, the presentation on "Women in security forces" noted that women are always active in war and have a right to participate in all careers. The nature of war is becoming techno-enabled and moving away from the need to recruit security personnel based on physical strength. Including women in security forces, particularly with an awareness of intersectional concerns, can help dismantle patriarchal norms, stimulate positive attitudes toward women, and influence

other sectors. Cultural norms and systems will have to be redefined, such as by improving family support systems, addressing women's double-burden (performing duties and being responsible for civilizing culture), and engaging men and masculinities.

Open Discussion on Presentation Topics and CSCAP Memo
The final session was an opportunity for group members to lay the groundwork for the content included in a CSCAP Memo on WPS with the aim of publishing this memo in 2023. Several suggestions were made for what to include in the Memo, such as the recommendations from civil society organizations from the Asia-Pacific (contextualized and localized); the gendered impacts of forced migration due to conflicts; and the identification of strategic regional issues on WPS to understand the unique issues, contexts, and strategies. The need for WPS funding and an implementable timeline were also stressed. A survey on prioritizing the current Study Group Objectives was offered to meeting participants. The top-ranked were Objective #2, Objective #4, and Objective #5. The least important was Objective #6, and the second least important was Objective #3. These results, combined with feedback during the group discussion, will be used to focus the Study Group's remaining work and the construction of the CSCAP Memo. The Co-Chairs intend to use this input to draft a concept of the Memo and circulate it to Member Committees for feedback prior to the next meeting, with plans to finalize the text at Meeting #4.

Appendix 1: Objectives of the CSCAP Study Group on WPS

Objective 1: Collect data on female participation in CSCAP events for baselining/further improvement. Identify which topics/initiatives are highest priority for CSCAP to integrate a gender perspective ("gender mainstreaming").
Objective 2: Baseline & raise WPS awareness among CSCAP members and provide information/training to increase policymaker fluency in the WPS agenda.
Objective 3: Explore how CSCAP Study Group's objectives are aligned with/feed into the ARF's envisioned goals in advancing WPS in the Asia-Pacific.
Objective 4: Assess implementation of existing WPS initiatives/UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent/related UN resolutions in priority regional countries. Identify barriers to the creation/implementation of National Action Plans and a Regional Action Plan; and challenges to adopting inclusive gender norms in the region.
Objective 5: Foster stronger ties in both Track-2 and Track-1 levels by cultivating a network of CSOs, NGOs, and next-generation peacebuilders in ASEAN and the broader region; using both virtual and in-person means.
Objective 6: Assess and bridge any differences between defense and foreign ministry efforts toward implementing the WPS agenda in the region.
Objective 7: Assess progress and differences between the ASCC and APSC in incorporating WPS principles and make recommendations for integration.
Objective 8: Publish expert papers as part of Study Group conference reports.
Objective 9: Develop a CSCAP Memo on WPS with practical recommendations for advancement of the WPS agenda in the region.