



CROATIA

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STATEMENT by
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- Security Council-
Open debate
Women, Peace, and Security

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Mr. President,

Croatia has aligned itself with the statement made by the United Kingdom on behalf of the EU, but I would like to add a few points based on Croatia's specific experience and achievements on the matter.

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to commend the Romanian presidency for organizing this open debate to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Since 2000, the international community has increasingly come to recognize not only how much conflict particularly affects women and girls, but also how often women hold the key to its peaceful resolution. It will be important to examine ways in which the provisions of this important cross-cutting resolution can be better implemented at the regional and national levels.

Croatia welcomes the UN system-wide Action Plan produced by the Secretary General which aims at highlighting the importance of gender perspectives in conflict prevention and peacekeeping activities. In order to achieve success in the post-war confidence building process it is essential to include women as active participants in post-conflict reintegration and reconstruction. This has also been borne out by Croatia's experience.

Women's protection in armed conflict and their fundamental role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding cannot be evaluated without taking into account that women are among those most affected by violence and the economic instability resulting from armed conflict. Yet, when it comes to negotiating peace, post-war reconstruction and reconciliation, women are grossly underrepresented. We should continue to press the main bodies of the United Nations, particularly the funds and programs, to strengthen the participation of women in their work and to streamline gender issues. Post conflict transition, recovery and reconstruction cannot be achieved if gender equality and the promotion of women's rights are absent.

Croatia welcomes the increased involvement of women in peacekeeping operations, especially among human rights and humanitarian personnel, military observers and civilian police. In this vein, we strongly encourage the practice of mainstreaming of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. At the same time, we must increase our efforts to improve the protection of women in armed conflict, parallel to acknowledging and enhancing their contribution to peace processes and in rebuilding their communities.

Mr. President,

The Commission for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia - an intergovernmental commission entrusted to create policies and coordinate all activities for the promotion of gender equality - incorporated a chapter on Women and Armed Conflict in the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality for the period of 2001-2005 and its Implementation Program. Both documents were adopted by the Croatian Parliament in December 2001.

The following activities have continued to be implemented throughout the period from 2001 to 2005:

- 1) The Commission for Gender Equality in co-operation with other relevant institutions and organizations, especially NGOs, has had the task of informing women about the work of the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.
- 2) It has educated women and children about land-mines and other types of explosive devices, secured appropriate assistance to displaced persons, refugees and victims of the Homeland War, and participated in the implementation of measures aimed at facilitating their return and reintegration into society.
- 3) The Commission has also been entrusted with the task of promoting the participation of women in activities associated with the maintenance of peace at all levels, enhancing knowledge of humanitarian law and human rights, and enabling greater representation of women in the bodies dealing with defense policy and security issues of the Republic of Croatia.

Some tangible results have already been achieved in pursuing the goals set in the National Policy, including:

- 1) the establishment of the Committee for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Defense,
- 2) the inclusion of the study of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in the curriculum of the Croatian Military Academy, as an integral part of the military education and training of the Armed Forces, with special emphasis on the promotion and protection of women's human rights and, measures aimed at combating violence against women in war, in armed conflicts and during post-conflict transition,
- 3) the adoption in July 2003 by the Croatian Parliament of the Gender Equality Law that, inter alia, stipulates an obligation for all state administrative bodies and corporate entities with public functions to apply special temporary measures and adopt action plans for the promotion of gender equality, thus introducing the principle of gender mainstreaming into Croatian legislation.

We seek to apply a gender perspective in Croatia's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. During 2005, two Croatian women officers have been serving in the peacekeeping mission in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and Cyprus (UNFICYP). Currently, five women officers from the Croatian Armed Forces are serving within the German contingent of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Preparations are taking place for a women officer to serve as a military psychologist in the peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In addition to that, a captain of the Croatian Armed Forces was the first woman officer to take part in the Military Observer Mission in India and Pakistan.

Of course, the success of the application of the principles and underlying themes contained in SCR 1325 rests upon the member states. In that regard, there is more that we all can do to ensure that women can fully and equally participate in all levels of decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Thank you.