

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Skårer Permanent Mission of NATO to the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. President, for letting NATO participate in this important debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their excellent presentations.

Civil society organizations have been instrumental in promoting women's rights and gender equality. To a large degree, it was thanks to civil society that resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security saw the light of day 12 years ago. As much as States and intergovernmental organizations show leadership in advancing that agenda, we have to recognize the important role that members of civil society play as opinion leaders and sources of information, as well as in keeping us accountable.

While States have the primary responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the resolutions on women and peace and security, NATO, as a political-military organization, is playing its part within NATO-led operations and within our partnerships. We have a policy, we have an action plan and, together with partners, we are turning words into deeds. On the political level, NATO is actively encouraging all its partners to adopt specific goals related to the promotion of women, peace and security issues in the various partnership programmes they develop with our organization. The overall aim is to raise awareness and to work towards greater female participation in the areas of defence and security. Women are still underrepresented in peace and reconciliation processes, and we encourage States and our partners to ensure women's participation in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

At the operational level, NATO and its operational partners in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Kosovo Force have demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting the important role that women can play, and have engaged with women leaders and activists to understand their views and perspectives. The Alliance has gender advisers and focal points at its various headquarters, as well as in operational theatres in Afghanistan and Kosovo. I work with these dedicated people and see the significant efforts they are making to mainstream resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions and to integrate the gender perspective into operations.

Experience to date has shown that having gender expertise, as well as having more female soldiers in theatre, improves our ability to conduct operations more effectively. For example, we have learned that female soldiers in Afghanistan are at times able to better connect with members of the population otherwise closed off from their male colleagues. This has led to greater awareness of the specific situation and area, and led to better dialogue and understanding between NATO forces and the local community. Our experience has also shown that training and education are strategic tools for security forces and for defence and security sector reform. If used correctly, they can be major force multipliers, as the attitudes of those trained can spread to walks of life beyond the security sphere.

As Council members are aware, the mandate of the ISAF mission was recently renewed, and the plans to hand over full security responsibility from ISAF forces to their Afghan counterparts are on course, as reaffirmed at the Chicago Summit. Throughout the transition process and beyond, we will continue to focus on gender-related training and to support the recruitment and retention of women in the security forces.

NATO works shoulder to shoulder with other international organizations maintaining international peace and security, and we seek to strengthen further our cooperation with the United Nations and others to make sure we learn from each other's experiences and pave the way for greater efficiency and more results.

Since my appointment as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, I have had the great pleasure of engaging in dialogue with women's associations in the security sector, women's rights activists, female parliamentarians and other representatives of civil society. I intend to deepen this dialogue.

NATO and its member States remain committed to upholding human rights and the rule of law. As we face up to the security challenges of the twenty-first century, we will continue to work with partners and other members of the international community to achieve better security and the greater empowerment of women.