

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict- Affected Situations, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Ms. Skåre, speaking on behalf of NATO*

Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to give a brief presentation on NATO's contributions to the implementation of the Council's resolutions on women and peace and security. Allow me also to welcome today's adoption of resolution 2122 (2013), which is yet another significant resolution on women and peace and security, and to thank our briefers for their presentations at today's debate.

In the year that has passed since I last addressed the Security Council (see S/PV.6877), work by NATO and our partners on the issue of women, peace and security has continued to progress. Awareness is growing, and it is better understood that mainstreaming gender in the broader security context will strengthen our ability to meet today's security challenges. Furthermore, our policies on women and peace and security are becoming a more integral part of our everyday business.

In NATO's collaborations with partner nations on women and peace and security we focus on joint political leadership, as well as on practical cooperation in the security and defence fields. Reforms and the rebuilding of security institutions should be gender-sensitive and ensure women's participation in security, as in any other sector of our societies. I am happy to report that over the past year a number of partners have included or are considering including women and

peace and security-related goals in their cooperation programmes with NATO.

A review of the practical implications of resolution 1325 (2000) in the conduct of NATO-led operations and missions has been concluded together with our partners in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the International Security Force in Kosovo, and recommendations on the way ahead have been approved by the North Atlantic Council. That review and the ensuing discussions in the Alliance with our partners provided a good opportunity for us to learn from our experiences in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

A key lesson is that we need to strengthen our focus on the implementation of already existing policies, action plans and directives. We are therefore pursuing the continued integration of a gender perspective into all phases and activities related to conflict analysis, planning and the execution of crisis management operations, and we are strengthening the role of gender advisers in the field. Those activities contribute to the enhancement of operational effectiveness and to the improved implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions in an operational context.

As documented by that review, training, education and exercises remain key tools for ensuring that our security institutions and armed forces have the necessary competencies. We have made strides in strengthening the gender training offered under the auspices of NATO. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, situated in Sweden, has been appointed department head for NATO gender training in military operations. Strengthened curriculums for both troops and gender advisers have been developed. NATO is also currently developing an online gender course, in close collaboration with the United Nations. We encourage partners to make use of available gender-training opportunities offered by NATO and its allies.

NATO's overall purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. The Alliance is not defined by the threats we face, rather it is defined by the values we share. We are united by the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

NATO fully recognizes the need to ensure access to justice for all, and we recognize the challenges that occur when the rule of law breaks down in a conflict situation and when there is no equality before the law. We do not have individual liberty if women cannot decide for themselves; we do not have democracy if women cannot participate; we do not respect human rights if women's rights are not respected; and there is no rule of law if women do not have access to justice.

The overall responsibility for ensuring the rule of law and equality before the law rests with nations, but the

role of international law in setting standards and ensuring accountability is also very important. Real gains have been made in developing the international legal frameworks and institutions to secure accountability and justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

NATO is exploring how we, as a politico-military regional organization, can best, within our role and responsibilities, prepare and assist in supporting the rule of law and gender equality through our activities. For example, under ISAF, we have been running a Rule of Law Field Support Mission to support and enable Afghan officials and international organizations in their rule of law efforts.

The heinous crimes, and in particular the sexual and gender-based violence, committed during conflicts have amplified the need to stand united in the struggle against impunity. Sexual and gender-based violence in conflict undermines freedom, security and stability, and, if unpunished, it undermines the credibility of any legal system, denying access to justice for all. Global prosecutions, civilian protection mechanisms, the contributions of the United Nations and other international organizations are there to complement national efforts.

In September, all NATO allies fully subscribed to the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. It is highlighted, both in that Declaration and in resolution 2106 (2013), that the collection of data and the documentation of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict can be instrumental in bringing perpetrators to justice and in ensuring justice for survivors.

We should, however, not regard women as passive victims and recipients. Just as women need to be included in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, women need to be included also in reconciliation and transitional justice. Women's participation is a matter of basic human rights and democratic principles. Those most affected by conflicts must be heard and enabled to contribute to the solutions that prevent conflicts. We cannot afford not to include

women. It is not simply a question of what benefits women, but of what benefits the whole society — men and women, boys and girls.