

## SUMMARY REPORT

### “WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICTS – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325”

19 February 2008, National Defence Academy, Vienna

On 19 February 2008 the international conference “Women in Armed Conflicts – The Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325” was held in Austria’s National Defence Academy. The event was jointly organized by the Austrian Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of European and International Affairs, and the NATO International Staff and hosted by the Austrian National Defence Academy.

The conference, which was well attended (approx. 130 participants from national governments, International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organisations), dealt with the question of how the objective of Resolution 1325 could be achieved on the national as well as on the international levels. After a welcome address by the Commandant of the National Defence Academy, General Raimund Schittenhelm, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ursula Plassnik, focussed on the precarious situation of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. She stressed the importance of implementing Resolution 1325 in practice. Afterwards, the NATO representative, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Security Cooperation and Partnership, Ambassador Robert F. Simmons, pointed out the need to include women in all phases of peace support operations and peace-building measures.

This was followed by a widely acclaimed keynote speech of Elisabeth Rehn from Finland. She was the first woman worldwide to be appointed as Defence Minister, later on held appointments inter alia as UN Under Secretary General and as the Secretary General’s Special Envoy to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is co-author of the landmark report “Women, War and Peace” published in 2002. Rehn impressively described the situation of women in armed conflicts on the basis of her experience gained from numerous talks to affected women. On the one hand she referred to women as being victims (“female bodies are the battlefields of fighting troops”), on the other she stressed that women show a noteworthy strength in conflict and post-conflict situations and that they have an enormous potential which should not be left unused in peace processes. Elisabeth Rehn rejected the argument so often put forward that involving women in peace processes in many countries seems not feasible since this would mean a breach of tradition. She said that she had never heard this kind of argument being used to reject other innovations brought about by the international presence, such as mobile phones or off-road vehicles.

The first round of discussion was chaired by Ambassador Simmons. The panel consisted of Nicole Reckinger of the EU Council Secretariat, Osnat Lubrani of UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Jamila Seftaoui of the OSCE and Annicq Bergmans, chairwoman of the NATO Committee on Women in NATO Forces. Each of the speakers presented the course of action of her respective organisation.

The EU Council Secretariat has been dealing with gender issues since the end of 2005. In this process, gender consciousness and orientation training are promoted on all levels. In particular, the post of a gender advisor in ESDP field missions has

been created. Within the UN, gender issues are, above all, looked after by UNIFEM. UNIFEM introduces gender perspectives at all levels of planning processes, offers related training in a number of countries and cooperates with other UN offices including DPKO, UNHCR, UNFP and OCHA. Resolution 1325 is also considered in OSCE activities: In 2004 an action plan on the promotion of gender equality was formulated and two decisions were adopted by the Ministerial Council. Thus, gender mainstreaming has become an inherent part of all programmes. Gender awareness also plays a significant role in OSCE operations and is considered an integral component of democratisation processes.

In 1976, the Committee on Women in NATO Forces was founded within NATO and has been holding annual meetings ever since, in which, among other things, recommendations with regard to gender mainstreaming are developed. Currently, the International Military Staff is tasked to develop a military concept for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 in all phases of NATO led operations. All speakers regretted the non-committal formulation of the resolution and pointed out that in the end international organisations depend on the good will and commitment of their member states.

The second panel, chaired by Peter Hazdra of the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management of the Austrian National Defence Academy, dealt with practical experiences gained from working in the field. Charlotte Isaksson (Senior Gender Adviser of the Swedish Armed Forces) underlined how important it is for soldiers in the operational area to meet women and to listen and talk to them. Women's views and the information they give are often quite different to those of men and, therefore, a relevant supplement to the situation awareness. Natalie Bergmann (Gender Adviser in the EUFOR HQ in Sarajevo) described her work and highlighted particularly how important it is that soldiers of all ranks receive training on gender issues. She mentioned how important it is that the gender advisor has direct access to the commander and mentioned that she also serves as point of contact for local employees of the operation.

Lesely Abdela (advisor of Eyecatcher Associates/Shevolution Consultancy, with many years of field experience) gave several examples from among various regions of the world, showing how important it is to include women in all concepts, programmes and measures. On the basis of concrete examples she illustrated that women often do not receive the benefits of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes for combatants, only because they did not actively fight, but served in supporting roles, such as carriers, manual labourers, cooks or sex slaves. Lastly, she made some concrete suggestions for introducing gender-balanced criteria for access to DDR funds.

Pierre Schori (former Swedish deputy foreign minister and subsequently the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to the Ivory Coast) indicated that there is a big gap between international resolutions and declarations of intent on the one hand, and the real conditions in the field on the other. The real situation is frequently characterized by a total lack of understanding for the objectives of Resolution 1325. Unfortunately, this is especially true for forces of developing countries. In many cases simple measures, such as separating the sanitary installations of women from those of men, help to improve the situation in refugee camps. In addition, he suggested that more men should be appointed as gender representatives.

The last panel, chaired by the Thomas Hajnoczi, Head of the Department for Security Policy in the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs, dealt with the action plans of individual countries. Elisabeth Riederer from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pernille Olesen from the Swedish Ministry of Defence, and Brigadier Kristin Lund from the Norwegian Armed Forces presented the national action plans of their respective countries with regard to the implementation of Resolution 1325. So far seven EU countries have introduced a national action plan. The contents of these action plans are quite similar, focussing in particular on introducing gender aspects in education and training, introducing a gender-perspective in all stages of peace processes as well as increasing the participation of women in international operations. All three presented action plans are designed as “living documents”, which means that they are evaluated on a regular basis and adapted as needed.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Simmons pointed out that there is a need to coordinate the efforts of all involved organisations. He further underlined that accountability is one of the keys for success and that the issue has to be kept on the international agenda.