

Remarks by

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First of all I'd like to thank the organisers of this conference for giving me the opportunity to speak today on what is one of my favourite topics, 1325. We've been holding the date for this conference ever since March, so I am glad the meeting is finally taking place. I would like also to say that it is nice to see so many men in the audience, this shows that mainstreaming is beginning to work!

It is indeed difficult to follow the previous speaker, Madam Vabah Gaylor, Minister of Gender and Development of Liberia--her country certainly has a lot to teach us all about how to implement 1325 and its principles. Nevertheless, my role here is to pronounce officially much of what you already know about the EU's take on this matter. From having looked at your conclusions and recommendations for the EU from yesterday's day of meetings, I can tell we are going to have a lively Question-and-Answer session today.

But now to the point: seven years ago last week, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution entitled "Women, Peace and Security," known among aficionados as 1325. Through this resolution, the international community committed itself to take into special account the vulnerable situation of women in times of war, and that UN member states must cooperate to involve women at all decision-making levels in peace-building and conflict resolution operations, as well as in humanitarian efforts.

The EU Council has on several occasions confirmed its commitment to implement fully the provisions of 1325, in particular in the context of ESDP. I note with pleasure that the conference organisers have included the text of the EU Council Conclusions from November 2006 in the background materials you have in your folders.

You may ask the question: why is the EU so focused on implementing UNSCR 1325, and in particular in ESDP operations? Let me try to answer this question. As you all know the promotion and protection of human rights is one of the objectives of the CFSP. And ESDP is itself a kind of projection of force, if you will, of the CFSP. So the starting point is obvious. We are talking about a guiding principle for ESDP operations.

Over the last years crisis management operations - ESDP operations - have emerged as a key instrument for tackling fragile situations. It is important to remember, as my boss High Representative Javier Solana reminded us some years ago, that "we are not in the business of doing this for its own sake, but in support of the values and principles for which the European Union is respected worldwide."

In addition to promoting the values the EU holds dear, it makes good policy sense to implement 1325. Here one might quote former UN High Commissioner for HR Mary Robinson, who memorably observed once that "Today's human rights violations are the causes of tomorrow's conflicts." Paraphrasing further and extrapolating to a 1325 context, this could even mean that today's failure to include women at all phases of negotiation and implementation of peace agreements could be the cause of tomorrow's conflicts.

For this reason, over the last two-three years, the EU has developed a normative framework for gender mainstreaming, based on UNSCR1325. This includes guidelines, checklists and other such operational papers that foresee training, appointment of gender advisers, working towards an improved gender balance and so forth.

While we can congratulate ourselves on having a framework, paper is not enough. We need to translate this in a much more vigorous way into action. Ensuring good training of qualified staff and the presence of human rights and gender advisers in the missions is a good start. I can tell you that all new missions begun since the adoption of the framework include a dedicated human rights adviser and some also have a gender advisor; this is certainly a positive development.

The Aceh Monitoring mission (AMM) was the first ever ESDP mission to include explicitly a human rights function, namely human rights monitoring. AMM is widely considered as a success story--not only were groups disarmed rapidly and the peace agreement implemented on time, for the first time human rights writ large were also monitored. The integration of the human rights aspect has certainly contributed to the success.

But we have also had a lessons learned exercise after this operation, as we do after every mission, and we noted that there is, of course, scope for improvement. One of the lessons was precisely that the gender mainstreaming aspect had not been fully integrated. In all fairness, I should mention that the gender mainstreaming conclusions were only adopted by the EU Council after the AMM started; this may be the reason. In any case, we have committed ourselves to put this right with new operations as they are proposed and deployed.

So if implementing 1325 makes good policy sense and is a more just way of going about one's business (considering that 50% of the affected population is female), why isn't it easier to convince others of the need to go further faster?

Those in the field are convinced that much of this reluctance is due to lack of understanding about what exactly 1325 means. I myself have had the experience of having to explain 1325 to cynics and sceptics who fear in 1325 another kind of feminist uprising, but in the crisis management field.

When it becomes clear that 1325 makes operational sense, opposition seems to melt away. A few days ago I saw General Viereck, the commander of the Congo mission in 2006, who was in Brussels--many of you might have heard him speak. He, too, was sceptical until he found himself commanding an operation enriched by the very first fully dedicated gender adviser. And one of the lessons he learned from this mission was that integrating the gender perspective into the mission had actually contributed significantly to the success of the mission--by consciously focusing on reaching the whole population, it proved easier to carry out the aim of the mission.

Allow me close with a concrete example of gender mainstreaming in the field not, unfortunately, from the EU but from a **Europe based agency sent to build a bridge recently in Sri Lanka**. During one of the pre-operations briefings for this mission, gender equality was on the agenda. However, the officer in charge of carrying out the operation didn't think that gender was necessary:

"Our task is to build a bridge, we don't need to worry about gender issues", he claimed.

The instructor then started to ask questions: "Who is going to use this bridge?"

"Well, the locals," the officer answered.

"You mean men, women and children?" the instructor asked?

"Well, yes."

"OK, how do they travel?"

"By car mostly," the officer answered.

"The women too?" the instructor asked.

"No, they'll probably walk," the officer answered.

"Then maybe you want to consider building a pedestrian zone on the bridge?" the instructor asked.

The operation officer could only agree.

"Now, gentlemen," the instructor concluded, "we have just used a gender perspective on building a bridge!"

And with that, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.
