

Action Plans in EU Countries: Switzerland

Cordula Reimann

swisspeace, Switzerland

Good morning to all of you. Thanks Petra for the kind words and a very big thank for the organiser to hold this highly timely event on 1325.

I would like to stress from the very beginning that the Swiss national action plan is a very current event – it is *the* event in Switzerland. It was published a couple of months ago as you may know on the 8th of March 2007. And, inspired very much by the debate we had yesterday, I would like to now highlight six lessons learned from the political process underpinning how we actually try to develop and hopefully also successfully implement 1325.

Let me make two preliminary remarks which seem to be most striking:

First of all, I think it is very important to tell you from what kind of perspective I am talking. I am talking from the perspective of swisspeace, a peacebuilding organisation, based in Bern, Switzerland, with very close contact to the Swiss government on the one hand and to Swiss nongovernmental organisations on the other hand. Swisspeace has been very involved in the development of 1325.

The second preliminary remark, I would like to make is that I think we've already seen in the case of Norway and the UK that it is always important to be aware of the sort of political context we work in and in which we develop the national action plan. In Switzerland we have the so-called principle of consensus; that means no matter how deep the political differences run, in the end there has to be a consensus. Even if you cannot subscribe to the political ideas of your political opponent, you have to be ready to accept a negotiated compromise. That may also explain why I would say we in Switzerland were lucky to have a very comprehensive strategy process, but also why - compared with other countries – it was a rather straightforward process.

What are the lessons learned?

Lesson number one: There needs to be some kind of institutionalised mechanism to bring 1325 to the policy level. What we have done at swisspeace is: from 2003, we held regular meetings with NGOs, with the Swiss governmental institutions on how to actually develop a national action plan, how to raise awareness about gender and

peacebuilding. And looking back, I think that was important to have some kind of institutionalised mechanism.

Point number two: I think it was very crucial that in Switzerland we are again lucky to have very critical NGOs, especially women's organisations, which didn't let go and always pushed for a national action plan, who always pushed for raising awareness on gender and peacebuilding. So I think the sort of watchdog role played by the NGOs was very important. As you may know, we had a so-called postcard campaign "The code is not secret", very much inspired by the women's security council here in Germany. In this context, NGOs lobbied for a national action plan on 1325.

Point number three: I think what is very crucial – we already heard it from Kate, Amy and others – is that you need the commitment of the government. A very serious commitment, not just lip service. We in Switzerland are very lucky to have a Foreign Minister who said, "it is basically my role. It has to be my mission to have a 1325 national action plan." So again I think we were just very lucky on that note.

The Foreign Ministry also has a gender focal point, which was a, if not the, critical agency to help to institutionalise this whole process on the national level. Also very important is that it was taken up by the top level of decision-making within the Foreign Ministry.

Point number four: It is very crucial that there is an institutionalised mechanism for developing 1325 in place on the governmental level. What we had in Switzerland was some kind of inter-departmental or inter-governmental working group called UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Switzerland, which brought together different departments of the Foreign Ministry but also the departments of defence and civil protection and sports – that's how it's called in Switzerland. And they had very clear terms of reference.

Point number five: It is very important to enable a very participatory kind of process among NGOs and among the Swiss ministry. How did we try to do it? There are of course always ways of improving and making this kind of process even better. But what we tried to do at swisspeace is to hold different sessions on the draft, which was available last year and to get the constructive-critical response by Swiss NGOs on the draft. This way the NGOs then had the opportunity to give their kind of feedback to the ministry and then we actually tried to include their critical responses.

Point number six: Now we actually are lucky to have this national action plan; of course now it is all about implementation. I think it should be all about increasing the

support, the responsibility and accountability. Again, it is important to have very clearly laid-out mechanisms and principals in an international action plan to make sure that you have this kind of accountability. What are we planning to do – we have to see, how far this is realistic and also productive – is to have annual meetings with the Swiss NGOs and the Swiss government. The Swiss government will declare report what progress they have made on 1325. I am sure, given the strong role of the Swiss NGOs, that they won't let go and want so see some specific results.

The Swiss national action plan also foresees the opportunity that individual citizens can suggest possible adaptations to the plan. As Amy, Kate and others have already stressed, the national action plan should really be a living document and it should be able to be changed according to not only policy changes but also according to different priorities. So there is a process clearly laid out in the national action plan as to what this procedure should actually look like.

In this context, I would like to share with you that in Switzerland we will organise a big public event in August/September on 1325 and the current key challenges in terms of implementation. This will be the first time - if it works we have to wait and see - we will hold an event on the implementation of 1325 together with the Swiss NGOs. The event will be jointly organised, jointly prepared, and actually jointly carried out by Swiss NGOs and the Swiss government.

I would like to conclude with three challenges, or, what could be called critical caveats, in terms of the implementation of 1325.

First, in Switzerland we also have to be very clear that 1325 is a very important policy document - no doubt about that. But it is one policy document, one policy reference point among many others important documents. We should not feel limited or "straightjacked" by the contents of 1325. 1325 for example does explicitly address men and their roles as victims of gender-based violence or ex-fighters and veterans and their specific needs - not only in terms of health and psychological needs, but also in terms of peacebuilding.

Second, I like very much what Mari said earlier on. I think it is always a kind of killer argument to say, "How can you prove that women really make a difference? When the women we worked with did not bring about any change. So why should we focus on increasing the numbers of women or introducing quotas?" Here, in Switzerland, what two organisations are now trying to do is to set up a pool of female mediators.

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They collect all the information of the mediators who are active right now; not only on the governmental level and on the so called non-governmental level. With this kind of pool it is no longer good enough to say, "We simply don't have the women. That is the reason why we didn't ask a woman to be on the negotiation team." This kind of pool then ensures that we have these women, we have all the information we need. And last but not least: I would like to stress that to increase gender awareness, it is important to offer training on gender and peacebuilding. But at the same time – I don't want to be too pessimistic here, just a little bit critical – I think to have training is one thing. But from our experience, especially with the Swiss ministry, if you don't offer any kind of on the job kind of advice, consultancy in the form of a mid-term, if not long-term kind of engagement, then we really end up with nothing more than just paying lip service to an issue. I think there it is all about giving very hands-on, very practical examples to decision-makers and seeing what kind of difference they can make if they include 1325 and if they are gender-sensitive.