

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Schuurman, NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security

I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council in this open debate as the new NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. The creation of a dedicated position within our organization is in itself a clear sign of NATO's strong commitment to deliver on the women and peace and security agenda.

I enter that office as we enter the fifteenth year of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It is a year of reflection. What did we achieve and how do we sustain our achievements? How can we ensure that it becomes simply inconceivable to work for lasting peace and security without engaging half of the population?

The issue of full participation of women is particularly relevant for today's central theme: displacement. The majority of displaced people are women and girls. The already existing gender inequalities make women particularly vulnerable in situations of displacement. But that vulnerability should not lead us to conclude that displaced women and girls are unable to take on leadership roles. On the contrary, time and again, it has been proven that women are key assets in preventing conflict, in better responding and in finding lasting solutions.

Unfortunately, women and girls remain all too often an untapped resource. I therefore commend the presidency for highlighting the need for the meaningful inclusion of displaced women and girls in decision-making and for integrating a gender perspective in policies relating to refugees and displaced persons in all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda.

Increasing awareness is key. Within NATO, integrating a gender perspective in crisis management exercises -for instance, through scenarios that include possible indicators that sexual violence is taking place -has proved to be an important tool for increasing the understanding and preparedness of our staff. At the recent NATO summit in Wales, we published a progress report on the NATO implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Much has been accomplished in order to integrate the agenda into NATO's everyday activities. We need to continue to show leadership and commitment in order to sustain and consolidate our achievements. To do that, this year we endorsed a revised policy and an action plan with clear and ambitious objectives.

I would like to stress that we did not do that alone. Both policy and action plan were developed with the participation of all 28 allies and almost 30 partner nations from all over the globe. Well over 50 nations signed up for concrete action to further reduce barriers to meaningful participation, to broaden our partnership with civil society and to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in our everyday security business. One of the very concrete deliverables is to develop military guidelines to prevent and to respond to sexual violence in conflict. We will strive to deliver on that commitment within the months to come.

The greater empowerment of women will benefit all our societies. It will also further our common cause of promoting lasting peace and security. NATO will continue to play its full part in the effort and translate its firm commitment into day-to-day practice.