

**The Role of UNODA and its Regional Centres
in Assisting States on Matters Relating to Peace,
Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control**

By

Angela Kane

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations



Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control

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I am very pleased to join you today since this event unites two issues—disarmament and gender equality—that are deeply rooted in the United Nations system, yet which have often been treated separately. Individually, these issues are so important that they have truly become part of the UN’s identity as an institution.

Some of us here today may have forgotten that the Preamble of the UN Charter declares that one of the basic purposes in establishing this organization was (and I quote) “...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” (unquote). Article 8 of the Charter went on to clarify that (again quoting) “The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.”

The Charter also included references both to “disarmament” and the “regulation of armaments”, two additional goals that all Secretaries-General, the Secretariat, and Member States have long recognized as high priorities.

Yet however clear the Charter was in identifying these goals, the task of achieving them required concrete actions by Member States—actions often inspired or at times even motivated by demands from civil society. So today I would like briefly to survey some of those actions taken.

In recent years, the event that served as a catalyst for profound changes at the United Nations was the adoption in the year 2000 of the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 that, *inter alia*, encouraged “all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants”.

Shortly thereafter, the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA)—as UNODA was then called—became the first UN entity to develop a Gender Action Plan. In 2010, our Office issued Guidelines for “Mainstreaming gender for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms”.

And every year during the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women we organise, in partnership with the umbrella NGO International Action Network on Small Arms, a forum on a topic related to gender and small arms.

Another landmark event that has helped to forge a common cause between gender and disarmament issues was the General Assembly’s adoption in 2010 of Resolution 65/69, originally sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago with the purposes not only of recognizing the many contributions of women in advancing disarmament and related goals, but also of underscoring the importance of encouraging further contributions in these fields. A new resolution on this subject will come up for consideration during the 67th Session of the General Assembly.

Our Office today continues to promote and support the implementation of gender-related UN mandates and policies, in particular the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. This is undertaken through our involvement in the work of UN inter-agency task forces and working groups, and through our organization of and participation in outreach activities, especially at the regional level.

To illustrate our work at that level, I would like to describe briefly some of the activities of our Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC).

Consistent with our Office's official mandates, UNLIREC has for several years assisted Member States by promoting and encouraging the robust participation of women professionals in decision-making and in the formulation of comprehensive strategies to combat illicit small arms trafficking.

The cumulative effect of these efforts together with other UNLIREC initiatives have resulted in a significant increase of female professionals from armed forces, police, civilian ministries and civil society who are now well-equipped to engage in combating illicit trafficking in small arms at the local, national and regional levels.

Through its unique initiatives, UNLIREC reaffirms its commitment to gender balance in its programming and in the implementation of resolution 65/69.

I am pleased to report that UNLIREC has made good progress in fulfilling these mandates. Its achievements have included—

- significantly increasing the percentage of women participating in UNLIREC's Inter-Institutional Training Course on Combating Illicit Firearms Trafficking;
- organizing women-only law enforcement training courses;
- training and certifying women to serve as officers in areas typically dominated by men, such as stockpile management and destruction of weapons;
- supporting the leadership of prominent women in the Ministries of Security and Defence in establishing national commissions on small arms control; and
- promoting a do-no-harm approach to ensure that women's interests are incorporated into national small arms legislation and policies.

Let me highlight in particular that the Centre—through its for-women-only activities on small arms control—has created momentum and a community of practice, reinforced by cooperation with civil society organizations. This is an especially important contribution, since access to technical training for women is vital to continuing combating illicit trafficking in small arms and to the implementation of the UN 2001 Programme of Action. Its Women-Only Training Course brings together women security sector officers from law enforcement institutions and the judiciary. This training focuses on the development of practical skills needed to address one of the most difficult challenges on the international security agenda raised by the illicit trade in small arms. I view all these achievements as significant indeed.

In closing, I would like to recall the words of one of my predecessors, Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala. Speaking to an audience at Harvard University in 2002, he said, "[When women move forward, and when disarmament moves forward, the world moves forward.](#)"¹

What could provide a better statement of our subject today? Let us move forward together.

¹ http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/HR/docs/2002/2002Nov08_Harvard.pdf.