

Speech/article, 26.09.2012

By: [Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide](#)

Source: **The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official website,**
<http://www.regjeringen.no>

The importance of gender in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation

**The Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms
Control meeting in New York, 25.09.2012**

Check against delivery

Dear friends,

First of all, I want to thank Trinidad and Tobago for this timely initiative, and for tabling the resolution on women's role in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in 2010. Ten years after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325, the General Assembly has finally addressed this issue. It was long overdue.

Resolution 1325 has influenced our thinking, our norms and our attitudes in fundamental ways, but there are still huge gaps in its implementation on the ground. The realm of hard politics and security is far from being gender-sensitive.

While we have seen progress in some areas, the gender perspective has largely been absent from disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation processes.

A stronger gender approach to disarmament could give much needed momentum to the multilateral processes that have largely become irrelevant. Not only do we need a stronger gender perspective. We also need to take the humanitarian dimension into account. If we look at the disarmament processes in which women and civil society have played vital roles, we see that new and successful approaches have been found. The processes leading to the Mine Ban Convention and to the Convention on Cluster Munitions were successful because women and civil society actively participated and drove the processes forward. And because it was recognised that the humanitarian costs outweigh the military utility of these weapons.

The next step must be to take into account the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. That is why Norway will hold a conference in Oslo in the spring of 2013 to focus on the impact of nuclear detonations, whatever their cause.

In our partnerships with organisations on the ground, we emphasise the gender perspective. Programmes that take into account the different needs and priorities of men, women, girls and boys, and that adjust their work accordingly, tend to

be more effective. And after all, it is effectiveness on the ground that is the real measure of success.

This is why we support efforts to improve the living conditions of women and girls affected by armed violence. And why we try to strengthen women's participation in humanitarian disarmament processes, and integrate the gender perspective in projects on land mines, cluster munitions and the control of small arms.

Our partners in the field, such as Norwegian People's Aid and Action on Armed Violence, point to the added value of having both men and women in mine clearance programmes. Further, in projects working with cultural perceptions, we see that women are able to change attitudes and behaviour relating to weapon use and violence.

Women living in conflict and war-torn societies are often disproportionately affected by armed gender-based violence. Their perspectives must be included in international instruments such as an Arms Trade Treaty and the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons for them to be truly relevant.

Norway is a strong defender of women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts. This is a matter of basic human rights and democratic principles. It is also a better way to build peace. Women's participation in peace processes can lead to broader and stronger local ownership and more comprehensive agreements.

Still, when we take a look at peace and reconciliation processes around the world, we see that women are few and far between. It is the warring parties that are trusted, not only to end the war, but also to build the peace. There are too many examples of weak peace agreements and faltering disarmament processes. There are too many situations where war has ended, but women continue to suffer from gender-based and sexual violence, intensified by a high number of guns and arms in their communities. Emboldened by weapons and power, former combatants continue to rape and violate girls and women with impunity. This has far-reaching implications for efforts to build peace, security and development.

We need new momentum and new approaches to disarmament, arms-control and non-proliferation. Let's listen to women and civil society. Let's listen to those who live with the consequences of conflict and violence every day, they just might have the solutions we need.