

**The voice of Women, a Voice for Peace**  
**EU Commission - DG Admin B4 - Equal Opportunities**  
**7 March 2008**

**Topics for Statement**  
**by Ana Gomes**

***The added value of women's participation in conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions***

**A. Initial remarks**

First of all, I would like to thank the Commission for organising this event and for inviting me to speak among such eloquent speakers.

The EU has a **duty** to promote the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions, due to its commitment to the UNSC Resolution 1325 and its own pledges on gender in the context of ESDP.

The **participation of women is crucial** not only as a matter of justice (for the sake of balance and equal opportunities) but also because of its added value: women are particularly skilled in establishing contacts and building trust with local populations, gathering intelligence or sensitive information and in supporting people affected by war or conflict, especially in cases where sexual violence was used as a weapon of war.

You just need to talk to Charlotte Isaksson, the Swedish army officer who was gender advisor of the military mission EUFOR DRC. The commanders of the mission were convinced of the importance of her work. (...) *to be explored...* Now, the EU has to build on this experience.

And much has already been done by the Council and the Commission in this area. For example, we have learned that nowadays gender concerns are taken into account from the first planning documents for all the most important ESDP missions. Also, the appointment of a gender advisor for these missions has become routine since EUFOR DRC.

Of course more can be done and one useful source of creative ideas is the May 2007 study by the Paris-based EU Institute for Security Studies on "**Gender Mainstreaming in ESDP Missions**":

1. The need for clear procedures in case of gender discrimination or harassment during deployment;
2. The importance of appointing women not just to ESDP missions, but also to the diplomatic functions linked to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (there are very few PSC ambassadors and heads of Commission delegations, and still no female EUSR)
3. The gender perspective must be more visible in EU's policy for Security Sector Reform (SSR)
4. Finally, this issue would receive a significant boost if a Personal Representative of the SG/HR for Gender issues would be appointed

But let me give you an overview on what the **European Parliament** in particular has been doing in this respect.

**B. EP work**

**Mainstreaming**

Following a report on gender **mainstreaming** in the work of committees, adopted in December 2006, the EP is trying to mainstream gender into the work of its various committees. I am myself gender contact point for the Security and Defence Committee. One of my battles, when I am

wearing this hat, has been to push for the inclusion of more women in ESDP missions (I'll get back to this later). I have also proposed a gender mainstreaming action plan, which was recently adopted by the SEDE committee. We will need to follow up on this in the upcoming months. Other committees are doing similar work in what concerns gender mainstreaming. Of course some are more active than others...

### Reports

In terms of **reports** adopted by the EP, there were two recent important reports in this field:

- a report by a socialist colleague Véronique de Keyser on the situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and democratic process in post-conflict countries, approved in 2006

*(...)to be explored*

- and a report that I drafted last year on Women in International Politics, which also touched upon the implications of the UNRSC 1325

*(...)to be explored*

### C. Looking ahead

I think there is a **lot more the Parliament can do**: from simple actions like promoting gender-neutral language within its own committee work to monitoring how the Commission addresses gender concerns in external relations namely with countries in post-conflict situations, for instance, through the country strategy papers of the Development Cooperation Instrument, in which the Parliament has a scrutiny role.

In what regards the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacekeeping missions in particular, the Parliament can also play a significant role in its interaction with the Council. And our action should be aimed not merely at increasing the numbers of women participation in these missions: the goal is also to **raise awareness among men and women** about the importance of integrating gender perspectives in such missions.

Take, for instance, the **EU mission to Kosovo...** The Parliament organised this week a hearing on how this mission will integrate gender concerns. We had a discussion with a parliamentarian, a key gender activist from Kosovo and the mission's gender focal point, Ms. Krumova. I was pleased to hear a very motivated Ms. Krumova talking about her role and I have great expectations concerning her work, namely in what regards gender training. However, I must also underline that according to the website of the EUPT for Kosovo (the EU preparation team for Kosovo), all 5 top positions are headed by men (including the heads of the justice, police and administration teams). The same website indicates that only 28.6% of staff are women.

Of course, Member States share a great deal of responsibility in this picture, since they often submit only a limited number of female candidates. The Member States must improve their efforts to increase the number of women in such missions. And to successfully achieve a greater level of participation those MS that do not yet have a **UNSCR 1325 national action plan**, should urgently adopt one. That is, for instance, the case in my own country.

### Conclusion

Finally, I do not want to finish this intervention without congratulating the Commission for having chosen this topic: the voice of women, a voice for peace. It is not an easy topic. And that is why - for me, personally - it is very interesting to work for gender mainstreaming in the field of security and defence. We still see a lot of resistance in this area.

Many - and unfortunately many with responsibilities in this area - still think that security and defence is a man's field. A field that women can only enter if they are particularly courageous and brave. It's time to get over these old fashioned speeches and start acting upon our commitments. Because, well, you know... there are a lot of courageous women out there.... Thank you.