

07 October 2007, Reykjavik

MORE WOMEN IN STRATEGIC POSTS

Today, Sunday October 7 in Reykjavik, the DCAF (*Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces*), taking advantage of the gathering of parliamentarians from some fifty countries during the annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, has launched an emotive appeal for a more successful campaign for the prevention and punishment of violence directed towards women in times of conflict and for promoting the presence of women in the armed forces and in civilian institutions.

In the course of a working lunch chaired by Jane Cordy, a Canadian Senator, which attracted some sixty people including about twenty men, the DCAF submitted an alarming report entitled "Sexual violence in armed conflicts", stressing the numerous and continuing infringements of the rights of women in the world in recent and current conflicts. The panel of experts invited to give their views on this problem laid great stress on the importance of implementing United Nations Resolution 1325, which refers expressly to the effects of armed conflict on women and girls and emphasizes the importance of participation by women in peace processes.

Ambassadress Alyson Bailes, a visiting professor at the University of Iceland, pointed the finger at the continuing dearth of female staff in key posts in government in all countries, thereby proclaiming that the armed forces do not have a monopoly in male chauvinism. She also stated her belief "that women when thinking about this set of challenges are more likely to appreciate the limited value of traditional military thinking, and the need for very close and sensitive co-ordination between different branches of government, and the need to cost out various solutions in plain economic terms as well as in terms of how much they involve sacrificing liberties and the normal comforts and freedoms of life for security's sake". In the opinion of Colonel **BERGMANS, the Chairwoman of the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces**, it is not only essential to promote the presence of women in the armed forces, but also to impose a code of conduct specific to NATO and adhered to if possible by each national army, so that troops in allied forces can be properly disciplined in the event of any abuse of the weakness of women in a conflict situation and in distress. The measures advocated by the DCAF before an audience of parliamentarians, which has said that it has heard the message include the formulation of national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325. More information on the activities of the DCAF is available on the Center's website: <http://www.dcaf.ch>.