

Committee on Women in NATO Forces
Remarks

June 11, 2007

- Good Afternoon.
- Honorable Members of the Executive Committee
 - Chair, Colonel Matschulat
 - Chair Elect, Lt. Colonel Bergmans
- Member country representatives, especially Germany, our host

- It is a privilege to speak here today.
 - I am honored to be with such a distinguished group of military officers.
 - I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to discuss issues related to women, peace and security with such a staunch group of allies.
 - And I greatly appreciate the opportunity you have given me, as a representative of civil society, to share with you my thoughts on issues I believe critical to NATO's success.
- I direct the Initiative for Inclusive Security, a non-governmental organization that advocates for women's inclusion in peace processes around the world. Since 1999 we have argued that peace and prosperity will only endure if women are involved in every effort to resolve conflict. Our thesis is simple: peace processes are less effective if women are excluded.

- Let me begin today with a hearty congratulations and thank you.
- The guidelines you are developing on gender demonstrate a true understanding of why women and women's priorities must be better integrated into the full range of NATO's efforts.
- I am cognizant of the enormous effort that has gone into developing the draft guidance, and I applaud the results.
- Once finalized, your excellent work will add to a growing body of resolutions and declarations that help make the case for women's involvement in peace building around the world. Documents like UNSC Resolution 1325, the G-8 declaration as well as pronouncements by the

Organizations for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Ministers of Defense of the Organization of American States and the African Union underline a growing, global commitment to women's inclusion.

- Those statements signal a sea change. They are an important accomplishment that must be applauded.
- At the same time, they signal the beginning—not the end— of our work. Because now the hard part will begin. We need to turn those statements, those declarations of intent, into reality.
- So how do we do that—what tools can we use to move our agenda forward?

- Inclusive Security, the organization I represent, spends much of its energy pushing women's inclusion. Let me tell you a bit about how we work.
- Launched by Ambassador Swanee Hunt in 1999 following her term as US Ambassador to Austria, the Initiative for Inclusive Security began with a global network of women peace builders, the Women Waging Peace network. Ambassador Hunt was struck by the complete marginalization of women in the peace negotiations around the Balkans and created the Initiative to remedy the inequality. Today our work is all in service of advocacy—advocacy for women's involvement in every stage of peace processes worldwide. We use a range of strategies.
- Our **network** now boasts over 500 women leaders worldwide.
 - People like Thandi Modise, former head of the Defense Portfolio Committee of the South African Parliament;
 - Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; and
 - Maria Emma Mejia, former Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- Those leaders are living examples of why women must be included in peace building; they are women who work across conflict lines to bring peace to war-torn countries. They also help us shape our message.
- Our network is complemented by **research**, research that documents how women add value to peace processes. Through that fieldwork we can demonstrate, for example:
 - That women steered the security sector reform process in South Africa to be participatory and transparent so that the general population could re-envision the post-apartheid military and accept it as a service of the State.

- Research has also shown us that demobilization programs have sometimes under-served and under-counted women combatants in places like Sierra Leone, disadvantaging women and undermining security.
 - Finally, as a result of our analysis we appreciate that women often are unique sources of intelligence, witnessing war crimes otherwise unseen in such varied locations as Rwanda and Bosnia.
- We use the findings of research to make our case to policy makers, to help them understand and appreciate how women's inclusion will facilitate their work, why women's exclusion is to their own disadvantage.
- Cooperation with other organizations furthers our cause. We use partnerships to enlist support for our efforts. We are:
 - Working with the US Department of State to improve recruiting so that more American women apply to positions as civilian police officers abroad. We also are working with them to design gender awareness training for officers deploying to Afghanistan.
 - We are collaboration with the Government of Liberia to help the Ministry of Defense recruit more women into their forces. At the same time we are encouraging them to involve women civil society leaders in efforts to reform the security sector.
 - And we even have worked with NATO. Earlier this year we brought Afghan women to Brussels for training and meetings with senior NATO officials, including the Secretary General. Those women provided their insights and perspectives on the conflict, and created a foundation for NATO officials in Kabul to meet with women leaders.
- At our core is always advocacy, advocacy structured around:
 - a well-argued, well-supported case based upon solid research;
 - a cadre of women leaders with a clear agenda they can communicate clearly;
 - constructive engagement to help organizations realize their goals for women's inclusion.
- Now you may ask what our approach has to do with your mission and your goals. I would argue "A lot".

- Though you are not advocates, as you seek to implement your guidelines, you will need to demonstrate that implementation is necessary and achievable.
- There is ample evidence to suggest how consultation with women can help troops bring security to conflict zones.
 - The departure of women and children from particular neighborhoods often precedes insurgent and terrorist attacks; women possess critical information about military plans and act based on that information. In 2006, five minutes before Canadian Lt. Trevor Greene was assaulted with an axe during a meeting with village elders near Kandahar, Afghanistan, all of the children were removed so they wouldn't witness the attack. Had women been asked about the meeting, perhaps Lt. Greene would have remained safe.
 - Ala Talabani, an Iraqi member of parliament explained to me how women, if asked, often knew where men hid weapons. Women stayed in their communities and knew where caches were stored. Ala begged to be asked to provide this kind of critical information and intelligence.
- Similarly, there is plenty of evidence that more women among police forces and troops can improve performance and internal dynamics, reduce excessive use of force and facilitate cooperation in local communities.
- But of course anecdotes and evidence are not enough. Often biases inhibit collaboration with women—fears that cultural practices prevent cooperation and communication; the belief that attention to women can come later; a lack of concrete plans and ideas for reaching out to and involving women.
- With persuasion and evidence must come ideas, proposals and plans—concrete strategies for achieving women's inclusion.
- For policy makers and generals alike, attention to gender is one item on a long, long list of Things to Do. The easier we make it for well-meaning people to do what is right, the more likely they are to act.
- We must be armed with suggestions, proposals and recommended first steps.

- Inclusive Security is very focused on developing those concrete strategies. Our goal is to make it as easy as possible to move forward with implementation.
- Today, we spend a great deal of time developing strategies for “how-to” get women involved in collaborating with armed forces, how to involve women in local policing, how to smooth the interface between women and peacekeepers. In January 2008 we will host a global colloquium to discuss enhancing the role of women in the security sector; that event will bring women working on security sector-related issues from conflict zones to discuss with experts action plans for increasing the role of women.
- In general, our hope is that by presenting evidence AND strategies, implementation will follow.
- Let me conclude with some ideas for how we might work together. As I reviewed the many good ideas you have included in your draft guidelines, a number of ideas came to mind:
 - Connecting you with women in our network. You have said you want to create a database of women experts, organizations and networks. We would be happy to contribute to that registry.
 - At the same time, as they emerge, we would be happy to share with you strategies we have developed to increase recruiting of women, as well as material we have developed for training troops in gender awareness. Much of the material is highly interactive and uses videotapes of women themselves discussing their priorities and needs.
- I am sure there are other ways for us to collaborate, and I look forward to exploring them in the question and answer period.
- I would end by simply telling all of you that “you are not alone”. Around the world experts today are striving to turn commitments on paper into reality.

- Congratulate yourselves heartily for the work you are putting into developing NATO guidelines, and let's work together to move this agenda forward.

Thank you.