“Against the backdrop of the countless atrocities waged and the serious violations of human, women’s and children’s rights committed by Russia, the WPS agenda and the human security approach are more relevant and important now than ever before”.

Irene Fellin, Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security

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NATO SECRETARY GENERAL’S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (SGSR WPS) COVERS BOTH WPS AS WELL AS HUMAN SECURITY WITHIN HER MANDATE
A year in review by Irene Fellin

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this spring edition of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Human Security (HS) Bulletin. As it has been just over one year since I was appointed as the Secretary General’s Special Representative (SGSR) for WPS, I feel it is time to reflect on our progress and successes, but also to look ahead to the objectives and priorities of the upcoming months, en route to Vilnius. It is also important to understand the potential challenges we might face in this process.

Peace in Europe has been shattered and the international order has been gravely shaken by Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine. We have witnessed indiscriminate attacks on civilians, unfathomable accounts of widespread conflict-related sexual violence, torture, displacement, killings, and forced deportations. We have witnessed the horrors caused by this armed conflict, but also the bravery, resilience, strength and hope of Ukrainian women and men.

This 21st century war is highly gendered and as such, we have to understand the gender perspective and the human environment to comprehend the conflict as a whole, who it impacts and how. The effects of this war on all people women, men, girls and boys, young and old in Ukraine are disastrous. Russian calculated missile strikes on critical civilian and energy infrastructure have left the population lacking water, electricity, heat and other necessities. Cities are left in the cold and dark as winter brings subfreezing temperatures and snow. Within our societies, women and men have different roles and responsibilities within their households and communities. Women and girls still overwhelmingly bear the highest burden in caring for society. They therefore suffer disproportionately from attacks that leave access to energy vulnerable.

Expectedly, my work as SGSR the past year has been profoundly affected by these events. Against the backdrop of the countless atrocities waged and the serious violations of human, women’s and children’s rights committed by Russia, the WPS agenda and the human security approach are more relevant and important now than ever before. In the context of this increased political attention and interest of the international community, I have briefed the North Atlantic Council at several occasions on evolutions regarding the human security and WPS situation and violations in Ukraine. I have also continuously consulted and engaged with Ukrainian institutional representatives as well as civil society and women’s organisations. Maintaining a strong dialogue with civil society is indeed one of the three pillars of the key priorities I had envisaged for 2022-2025. It allows to enhance NATO’s understanding of how women perceive and are affected by security challenges and how NATO’s work can contribute to greater gender equality. The two other pillars
of my priorities consist in directive – knowing where we are heading – and disruption – being attentive to the emerging challenges and opportunities we will face.

On the margins of the Madrid Summit in June 2022, I co-organised, together with the State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs of Spain, a side event on “Advancing Women, Peace and Security in Today’s Geopolitical Context”. This event saw Olena Suslova, Founder of the Ukrainian Women’s Information Consultative Center, highlight the important participation of women in the war in Ukraine. Fawzia Koofi, Vice President of the Afghan National Assembly from 2005 to 2014 and winner of the CASA Asia ‘Diversity and Sustainable Development Award’ 2021, was also invited to share her views on the deteriorating situation for women in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban. This initiative sought to gather women’s voices, by serving as a platform to share experience and to reflect on the role the international community and women could play in conflict situations, and to provide reinforced support for women peacebuilders, negotiators and mediators. It is crucial to offer women from across the globe such safe platforms to be heard. Afghanistan and Ukraine are of course experiencing very different crises, but it is essential for all women, through a variety of international fora, to be able to connect, share, be seen and listened on their suffering and fights. Despite our differences, we can all unite in our struggles and offer each other unwavering support.

NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept, which defines the security challenges facing the Alliance and lays out the Alliance’s priorities is timely. The political document, adopted at the above mentioned Madrid Summit, explicitly recognises WPS and Human Security as “cross-cutting” areas of work for the first time. It emphasises the importance of ensuring that they are integrated into all three NATO core tasks: deterrence and defence, cooperative security, and crisis prevention and management. Most importantly, Allies also agreed to “advance gender equality as a reflection of our values.” This speaks to the heart of who we are and what we do: an Alliance of democracies working together to safeguard our people and our values, including freedom, rule of law and human rights. Our biggest challenge now is to make sure that the Strategic Concept is fully implemented. It is crucial to translate these principles into action without any further ado.

The Strategic Concept reflects the current security environment in which civilians are being deliberately targeted in conflict, and their safety and security are being leveraged to serve military objectives. For this reason, human security has come to occupy a central role in our work. The adoption last year of the Human Security Approach and Guiding Principles marks yet another important step in NATO’s long-term commitment to human security. The 2019 London Leaders’ Meeting and the 2021 Brussels Summit had already seen Leaders highlight the importance of human security for NATO. With this foundation, Allies agreed on a common understanding of the concept of human security for NATO. The guiding principles direct NATO to be people-centred and actively integrate gender perspectives and address the differentiated impacts of conflict and crisis on different people in the population, especially vulnerable and marginalised individuals. The Human Security Approach and Guiding Principles also underline that the Human Security and the Women, Peace and Security agendas complement and reinforce each other. For NATO, taking such an approach means embedding considerations for the comprehensive safety and security of its population into all stages and levels of Alliance operations, missions and activities, wherever NATO operates, with the objective of preventing and responding to risks and threats to all people, especially in conflict or crisis situations.

Within this framework, the destruction of cultural property, defined as one of the five areas of human security, has always been instrumentalised to demoralise populations because of cultural property’s core ties with identity and common history. This military strategy is mirrored today in Russia’s war against Ukraine, which has caused damage to more than 200 cultural sites, according to UNESCO. This number continues to grow every day. A robust institutional framework is essential to adequately protect valuable heritage. On page 7, you will learn the measures that NATO has already undertaken to protect cultural property, as well as envisaged next steps, namely the development of a fully-fledged policy.

NATO has also recognised the disproportionate impact of crisis and conflict on children. Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) represents another key area of human security at NATO. The latest developments of the war in Ukraine have unfortunately demonstrated the extent of harm which can be inflicted on this vulnerable group, from sexual violence and abuse to forced and unlawful disappearances and transfers. Conflict not only severely hinders the ability of children to gain education in safe environments, but also to develop free from psychological trauma. Therefore, its repercussions on society persist many years after the resolution of a crisis. If no protective or reparative action is taken, armed conflict may effectively lead to the loss of entire generations. On page 5, this bulletin underlines the ongoing work for the development of a comprehensive policy on CAAC at NATO.
As we look towards the future, integrating a gender perspective and applying a human security lens to our work also means exploring and understanding emerging security challenges. These have the potential to disrupt the foundations upon which WPS and human security have been built and further aggravate pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Applying a gender perspective to emerging issues allows us to develop inclusive, sustainable solutions, preparing the Alliance to address the challenges of today, tomorrow, and the decade to come.

The pillar of ‘disruption’ envisaged in my key priorities recognises that emerging security challenges often provide opportunities to bring in new perspectives on the work that we do. Such is the case for Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs). The Strategic Concept highlights that EDTs “bring both opportunities and risks […] altering the character of conflict, acquiring greater strategic importance and becoming key arenas of global competition”. EDTs have already invaded our lives in many forms and contexts and their role in our society is only increasing. We should keep a very attentive eye to all the possible biases that will accompany the launch of these technologies. It is essential to be aware of the existence and consequences of EDTs in order to mitigate their negative impacts and to manage the responsible use of technology. We should also seek to get ahead of the game, by anticipating the technologies that will be developed tomorrow, how they will be deployed and who will wield them. The article on page 14 gives an overview of the challenges stemming from EDTs and adds a gendered point of view.

New perspectives also come from widening the diversity of the stakeholders that participate in our policy-making processes. We must therefore include youth in a meaningful way. It is important to work for and with young generations to harness their potential and foster sustainable peace and security. Yet, although NATO already engages on a large scale with youth, it has not yet aligned itself officially with the United Nations Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250. This is why one of the key priorities I had avowed for 2022-2025 was to explore how this agenda might be integrated into our core tasks. This work has begun. The article found on page 11 will do exactly what we strive to achieve: give youth a voice. The Youth7 Network give their views on the complementarity of WPS and YPS, as well as their lessons learned in advocating for the UN YPS agenda and why doing so matters. Their article focuses on the next steps that NATO can take to help further institutionalise YPS.

I am looking to the year ahead to maintain and further this engagement with youth. Building up towards the Vilnius Summit, awareness raising events and more meetings with youth organisations will be arranged. The objective of these discussions is to identify the best platform to include youth in a meaningful way in our policy-making and decision-taking instruments and processes. Youth has an important say, let us listen to them.

Finally, meaningfully integrating WPS and human security in our work, as required by the Strategic Concept, also means sustaining dialogue between the political sphere of the Alliance and military forces.

In operations, we must continue to strengthen the effectiveness of our gender advisor (GENADs) structures. This means listening to GENADs themselves and understanding their role and challenges, as well as untapped potential and misconceptions they face in their work. Engaging with the military side of the Alliance is an important part of the pillar ‘dialogue’ of my key priorities envisaged for 2022-2025. On page 17, you will be able to hear directly from GENADs in two of our operational contexts: AIRCOM and LANDCOM. The article, which takes the form of an interview, explores what this so-called ‘gender perspective’ truly means in each area of operations and planning, as well potential future milestones and achievements. The article highlights the added value of GENADs for NATO, and the WPS agenda as a whole.

Dear all, one year on, I am as determined to promulgate and support the role of women as I was when I first took office as Special Representative for WPS and HS. From students, youth representatives, civil society members, to Ministers, military representatives and Ambassadors, this year has been rich in engagement, representation and action. Throughout 2023, I will continue to work to integrate the gender perspective across our core tasks and to advance NATO’s understanding of human security. It is with all dedication and commitment across the Alliance that we will succeed in bridging the gap between today’s reality and our ambitions for tomorrow.

Irene Fellin
NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security
WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AT NATO?

The growing complexity of security environments, including in densely populated urban areas, affects children in a disproportionate way. NATO forces may operate in this challenging human terrain, making it important for the Alliance to support the protection of Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC), in line with NATO values and principles.

In 1999, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) recognised the key threat to international peace and security posed by CAAC in its landmark resolution 1261. This resolution identifies and condemns six grave violations against children as follows:

1. Killing or maiming
2. Recruitment or use of child soldiers
3. Rape and other forms of sexual violence
4. Abduction
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals
6. Denial of humanitarian access

NATO Leaders first addressed CAAC in NATO-led operations and missions at the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago. Allies recognized the need to develop practical, field-oriented measures for the protection of children from the dangerous effects of armed conflict. As a result, NATO adopted its first Military Guidelines on CAAC later that year, outlining a broad framework to integrate UNSC resolutions into its operations and training.

At the Wales Summit in 2014, Leaders decided that the Alliance should do more to ensure it is sufficiently prepared whenever and wherever grave violations against children in armed conflict are encountered.

In response, in 2015 the North Atlantic Council adopted the document entitled The Protection of Children in Armed Conflict – Way Forward, which sought progress on CAAC in four priority areas:

- Monitoring and reporting on the six grave violations committed;
- Training of the military leadership and personnel of Allies and Partner Nations’ Forces when participating in NATO-led operations or missions;
- Awareness-raising of local security forces;
- Political Dialogue to encourage relevant governments to implement CAAC Security Council resolutions and to engage with the UN on common child protection concerns.

The Alliance has made great progress in shaping measures to address conflict-related violations against children. Standard procedures for monitoring and reporting on these violations in NATO-led missions and operations have been developed in consultation with the UN and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Focal Points for CAAC have also been appointed throughout the NATO Command Structure. Their role is to support the integration of the Military Guidelines on CAAC into training opportunities, exercises and mission planning.

WHY DO WE NEED A CAAC POLICY?

As modern warfare changes, challenges in protecting children on the battlefield also change and policies and practices must evolve to remain effective. NATO recently adopted a holistic approach to human security, applicable to all stages and levels of NATO operations, missions and activities, wherever NATO operates. It is thus essential to integrate this approach into the various topics covered under the human security umbrella, including CAAC.

With this in mind, work is underway to develop a policy framework to account for this complex and changing security environment. The policy will particularly allow NATO to take stock of new and evolving trends of violations against children from Russia’s war in Ukraine. It is also important to address the relatively new area of pro-active prevention of grave violations against children in armed conflict.

The process of developing a new policy gives NATO the opportunity to reflect upon the evolving discussions in the UN Security Council on CAAC, and to absorb the lessons learned and good practices of seven years of implementing the 2015 Military Guidelines.
Consultations with national military authorities will enable NATO to include in the policy the practical considerations of situations that have arisen in their missions and operations.

Overall, the goal of this policy will be to assist NATO in better preventing harm to children in armed conflict, and protecting children in missions and operations in both Allied and partner countries.

The policy will be drafted in close cooperation with the military staff of NATO. Consultations with a number of NGOs, the UN and other international organisations will also take place. Briefings and other events will be organized as a way to raise awareness about the topic and generate political interest ahead of the adoption of the policy. Amongst others, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch were invited to NATO Headquarters in Brussels to highlight the immense suffering of children in Ukraine due to the ongoing war.

The July 2023 Vilnius Summit will present an opportunity to build momentum on CAAC and for NATO Leaders to endorse the new policy at the highest political level. In this way, NATO is taking a step further in protecting children from the devastating effects of conflict.
“In the path of our advance will be found historical monuments and cultural centres which symbolize to the world all that we are fighting to preserve. It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these symbols whenever possible. [...] through the exercise of restraint and discipline, commanders will preserve centres and objects of historical and cultural significance.”

General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s order to all subordinate commanders on 26 May 1944

WHY DOES CULTURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION MATTER FOR NATO?

The preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty provides that the Parties to the Treaty “are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples”. Cultural property (CP) is defined in the first article of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Hague Convention) as “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people”. Because of CP’s intrinsic roots in a community’s shared history, values and traditions, it constitutes by nature an expression of their cultural identity and a fundamental component of a people’s common heritage and civilisation.

Thus, cultural property protection (CPP) is at the heart of our common values as an Alliance. It is an important consideration in understanding the operational environment. It is also a critical indicator of community security, cohesion and identity.

The role of CP has grown increasingly prominent and complex as aggression and destruction is instrumentalised to demoralise and destroy communities’ identities, as recently seen in Ukraine. Looting and illicit trade of CP is an important aspect of modern warfare, both as a source of proceeds for organised criminal activity, and for the financing of terrorist organisations and networks. In other words, CP trafficking has been feeding the machinery of global security threats.

Our work on human security, and in particular CPP, is as relevant as ever in light of Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine. Russian armed forces are targeting Ukrainian cultural property in an attempt to rattle the people’s resilience and will to fight, while erasing their identity. With a growing number of cases of unlawful, deliberate, and widespread damage or destruction of cultural heritage sites in Ukraine, adequate reporting and documentation must be supported.

CPP is defined in Article 2 of the Hague Convention as “the safeguarding of and respect for such property”. In practice, it describes all efforts dedicated to managing the various challenges related to CP, both in peacetime through preparatory measures, as well as in the event of armed conflict and particularly during military operations. NATO’s mission is to support Allies’ obligations towards CP, and to integrate CPP into preparing, planning and conducting its operations and missions at all stages, as well as in delivering education, training, exercises and in evaluating Allies’ militaries.

WHAT HAS NATO ALREADY DONE?

CPP is a cross-cutting topic. The different military disciplines, branches and command levels should all take CP into account, as it could affect the mission in a number of ways. Particularly, joint planning should address CP as an essential part of the operational environment.

As one of the first steps towards effectively integrating this cross-cutting topic across NATO-led missions, the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learnt Centre (JALLC) issued a 2012 study on CPP in the operations planning process. The study aimed at analysing NATO’s success in avoiding damage to CP during operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR in Libya. The most significant findings of this report are that NATO needs policy, doctrine and assigned responsibilities with regard to CPP. It recommended the adoption of a CPP policy as a way to feature the commitment of the Alliance to protect CP, unify its definition, and identify roles and responsibilities within NATO for CPP.
Since then, NATO has taken action towards a more coordinated approach on CPP. In November 2018, the Allied Joint Doctrine for civil-military cooperation was published by the Allied Joint Publication (AJP), and it recognised that the military has an essential duty and responsibility to protect cultural heritage in times of armed conflict, when others are unable to protect the legacies of previous generations. The doctrine found that “the integration of cultural property protection into a military mission requires identifying cultural property within engagement parameters, but also looking at the significance of cultural property for the identity and culture of the population.”

NATO furthered its efforts on the protection of CP most notably by developing a Bi-strategic command (Bi-SC) directive (ACT and SHAPE) for CPP in 2019. This Bi-SC aimed at ensuring the consideration of CPP in a cross-cutting manner, across all phases of military operations in all branches. Separately, CP has also been the subject of NATO Executive Development Programme (NEDP), with a project in 2020 on Safeguarding Cultural Property. The aim of the report produced was to suggest a roadmap to implement a NATO CPP Information and Knowledge Management capability, building upon NATO’s existing knowledge and resources. It concluded that, in order for NATO to identify cultural heritage, it needs a “reliable, geo-related, military relevant database […] to be timely available in accordance with specific targeting standards”. As a next step, the report recommended developing a NATO policy on CPP under the human security umbrella.

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

As the destruction of CP is increasingly used both as a weapon of war and source of revenue during conflict, the need for protection also increases. Military commanders have often found themselves lacking the tools for including CPP in the planning, conduct and post-action review of operations. Effectively consolidating and mainstreaming an approach on the protection of CP across all NATO work-strands requires a robust institutional framework. The development of a comprehensive CPP policy would constitute a paramount tool towards achieving this goal.

This process has been launched. NATO is currently working on the development of a policy, with the objective to strengthen the CPP function within the armed forces.

Consultations with relevant major stakeholders on CP, like UNESCO and Blue Shield, are foreseen. The exhibition ‘Culture in Armed Conflict’, organised by the Dutch Delegation to NATO and opened on 7 November 2022 at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, offered an example of a highly relevant event to showcase work on CPP.

On 9 February 2023, a CPP Conference was hosted, drawing lessons learnt, past practices and experience of NATO in dealing with CPP. The aim of the conference was to assess the implications of the protection of cultural property in armed conflicts for NATO and Allies and identify new trends, practices and challenges in this domain. The conference gathered a broad range of civilian and military practitioners, experts and national representatives, who engaged in discussions on drafting the policy.

Other awareness raising events will continue to take place in the run up to the adoption of the CPP policy.

This work will allow the policy to be as comprehensive and fit-for-purpose as possible. In this way, we can further support the protection of our common heritage, as enshrined in NATO’s founding Treaty.
Youth, Peace & Security (YPS)

Young People as Drivers of Change & Agents of Peace

The following article was written by the Youth7 2022 co-chairs Carolina Claus and Benjamin Günther as well as one of the Track Sherpa Eva Croon.

What is published in THIS ARTICLE does not constitute the official position or policy of NATO or member governments. The views expressed by authors are their own.

In 2022, Germany held the Presidency of the G7. Under the German Presidency, there are seven official civil society groups, so-called Engagement Groups, which develop independent political demands and bring them directly to the G7 Leaders. One of these groups is Youth7.

Officially mandated by the Federal Chancellery to implement the Youth7 process is the International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (IJAB) in cooperation with the German National Committee for International Youth Work (DNK). The youth organisations Deutscher Bundesjugendring (DBJR), Deutsche Sportjugend (DSJ) and Ring politischer Jugend (RPJ) are represented here. One of the five Youth7 core themes for 2022 is Youth, Peace & Security.

Peace & Security Policy Revisited – What about Youth?

Peace and security are currently being re-thought in a variety of ways, most recently by feminist security experts who consider human security over state security. This brings together a wide range of actors from academia, politics and civil society. However, the current political discourse on peace and security issues has failed to adequately gather and reflect the perspectives of young people. Although Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) is by no means a new topic on the political tableau, young people rarely have a voice in policy debates about topics like arms proliferation and control, geopolitical balance, privatisation of security or peace negotiation, and little to no influence in decision-making processes. The UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) (commonly known as the “YPS agenda”) recognise the positive role of young people in building and sustaining peace and security and thus aim to involve them actively in future peace and security processes. The YPS agenda aims to improve the protection of young civilians’ lives and rights, prevent violence, reintegrate youth affected by armed conflicts, and build strong partnerships with young people, who speak as experts on their own behalf. However, the practical implementation of the Agenda in (national) governance is more than insufficient. Bright exceptions can be found in a few countries, including Canada, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland, which include the YPS agenda in their foreign policy orientation, but are yet only embarking on their journey towards the meaningful implementation of the Agenda.

YPS as a Valuable Complement to WPS

Consequently, the challenge we are facing is that countries are not fulfilling their obligation to implement the YPS agenda. The Agenda is primarily being advanced by young volunteers at present. They are building on the experiences and knowledge of recognised, institutionalised and legitimated international Youth Delegate mandates to the UN, G7/G20 and other international institutions and organisations. However, these active young people are facing a lack of response from governmental institutions. To counter this, we have developed the Policy Recommendations, which include four concrete recommendations for the G7 and partner countries. These recommendations concern actions and implementation of the YPS agenda, tackling issues of youth participation, youth facing violence, and youth in war.

Furthermore, the aim is to mainstream YPS in all political fora. We see our work on YPS not only as a (hitherto) missing building block in peace and security policy, but also as a valuable and necessary complement to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. In both fields, UN Security Council resolutions advocate on behalf of important stakeholders who have been excluded from decision-making processes, but offer valuable perspectives that go far beyond traditional understandings of peace and address gendered and intersectional forms of violence. YPS and WPS are complementary and demand intersectional approaches capturing age and gender sensitive dynamics.
YPS – NOT YET RECOGNISED YET IN THE G7 LEADERS COMMUNIQUÉ

In the G7 context, peace and security issues were high on the agenda in 2022. We, as Youth7, were mainstreaming YPS throughout our efforts en route to the 2022 G7 Summit, which took place in Germany in June. However, a youth perspective related to peace and security was not included in the G7 Leaders’ Communiqué, nor was the term “youth” itself. This showcased a significant lack of understanding of youth-related issues and the role of youth in democratic and peace processes.

As Youth7, we were disappointed to see that the Leaders’ Communiqué did not mention the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. We were, however, pleased to see that the Women, Peace and Security agenda is addressed and promoted. We urged G7 Leaders throughout the entire process to focus on the role of young people in crises, peace and democracy, but they missed the opportunity to recognise the importance of youth in peace processes and efforts to strengthen democracy.

EXCHANGE WITH NATO

On 9 September, we gratefully accepted the invitation of Irene Fellin, the NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, to meet at NATO Headquarters in Brussels to raise our voices on the policy recommendations of our Youth7 Communiqué on YPS. We discussed NATO’s role in further implementing and supporting the YPS agenda to ensure meaningful engagement with children and youth.

We applaud that NATO recognises the importance of YPS and the outstanding role of young people in peace and security processes. NATO has already included efforts in their Peace and Security Program, e.g. designating the NATO 2030 Young Leaders, and hosting an annual NATO Youth Summit. While it is important to develop these approaches with (young) professionals, young people must be addressed in a broader sense. This includes engaging with existing youth organisations and structures, but also avoiding the siloed participation of young experts on peace and security issues, as this could lead to a tokenistic form of representation. And this is far from meaningful participation.

The implementation of the YPS agenda is of the utmost importance as there can be no peace without the involvement of young people on all levels. YPS is not an “added benefit” in “good times”. That is why it is urgent that YPS and related commitments are implemented by every country while international organisations and institutions are pressing and supporting states to commit to this obligation.
SPECIAL ENVOY ON YPS AT NATO?

In a nutshell: if we could highlight one thing on our wish list, we would ask for a Special Envoy on YPS at NATO!

The Office of the UN Secretary General’s Youth Envoy at the United Nations is a leading example of how political youth participation can be strengthened and successfully achieved at the international level, and of how long-lasting peace can be achieved through inclusive, diverse and just processes. The establishment of a Special Envoy on YPS alone is not sufficient for these aims. Rather, the position within the institutional structures is decisive only to the extent to which the political agenda on YPS can be successfully and effectively implemented, especially in regards to structural resources. In our opinion, it is high time for NATO and Allies to fully commit to the YPS agenda and to lead as an example during this crucial moment in history. If conflicts in recent years – be it the war against Ukraine, the civil war in Syria, the crisis in Iran etc. – have proven one thing, it is the extraordinary impacts that those events have on the lives of young people. Now is the moment for NATO to recognise the detrimental effects that conflicts and the absence of peace have on youth.

YOUTH WORK IS PEACE WORK – NEXT STEPS FOR US

Even though the German G7 Presidency was concluded at the end of 2022, our work on YPS does not end. We will continue to call upon G7 Leaders and beyond to lead by example in the implementation and institutionalisation of the UN Security Council Resolutions and to develop national action plans. We would like to implement this at the federal level and through alliances with our partners in youth organisations on a global scale.

The YPS agenda in Germany has not yet been institutionalised despite our best efforts so far. We advocated for it to different ministers, organisations and even the Chancellor. However, these processes take time. We are committed to fulfilling the goal of national institutionalisation, which we set for ourselves when we took on this task. For this, we, as former representatives of the Youth7 Germany 2022 in collaboration with other partners, allies and experts on YPS, founded the National Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security on 4 December in Berlin. We can conclude by saying: we came to stay.

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The Importance of Understanding the Gender Perspective and Human Security Implications for Emerging and Disruptive Technologies

As emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) become increasingly pervasive within our societies, the impact they cause on defence and military capabilities, strategy and operations may be revolutionary. EDTs span across a wide range of different technologies, be it space, data and artificial intelligence (AI), quantum technology or even human enhancements. The way NATO operates is evolving and will continue to evolve, along with this new rapidly changing strategic environment. As a consequence, opportunities and risks associated with EDTs will arise, and ethical and legal questions will need to be addressed.

Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine is a highly gendered 21st century war, where the use of new technologies and cyber warfare have already deeply impacted the human environment. These new technologies are being used as evidence of atrocities, showing how EDTs are shaping new frontiers of a more complex, multifaceted battlefield.

In its new Strategic Concept, adopted at the Madrid Summit in June 2022, the Alliance has recognised the need to adopt and integrate new technologies, shape standards and commit to Principles of Responsible Use (PRUs) for AI to reflect our democratic values and human rights. Gender equality is one of those key values. The Strategic Concept designates Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Human Security as cross-cutting areas of work that need to be integrated into everything the Alliance does, including any work related to EDTs: a new and critical area for the application of these agendas.

The current Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security (SGSR-WPS), Irene Fellin, envisions the rise of EDTs as a disruptive element, crucial to expanding new horizons and not necessarily negative. NATO’s Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on WPS 2021-2025 calls for gender mainstreaming in the domains of innovation and new technologies. In this...
respect, applying a gender lens and human centred approach is and will remain a priority to fully embrace EDTs, and will enable a full picture on EDTs and their implications. For this, we need to comprehend the nexus between technology and WPS, but also between technology and human security. This will allow us to refine our understanding of the human environment, including risks and threats to the involvement of and implications for women and men.

In the virtual environment, research unambiguously shows that gender biases are prevalent, in particular in AI and training data sets. AI generated patterns, predictions and recommended actions are reflections of the accuracy, universality and reliability of the data sets used, and a product of the assumptions and decisions of the program developers. If flawed human assumptions are designed into technologies, then they could be less effective or cause inadvertent harm when used in real-world contexts. Such biases could therefore have adverse impacts if the risks are not properly identified and subsequently mitigated over the lifecycle of the technology. Moreover, the fact that the AI workforce is a male-dominated environment (over 90% of AI professionals in 2022 were male) may lead to biases in the algorithmic output. Getting more women on board in AI creation and other tech areas will broaden the viewpoint as more diversity in the workforce stimulates diversity of thought. Especially in such a creative, transformative industry, diversity of thought can be conclusive to enhancing the quality of product and content development. It is therefore important to ensure that the gender balance is respected amongst people working on EDTs at technical and policy levels.

Applying these biases to facial recognition systems, which are trained to identify people in crowds and analyse emotions, could for example result in rendering men hyper visible as targets, whether civilians or combatants. This is due to the nature of the raw data which the AI system would be “fed” and upon which it will learn; data which will show the tendency for combatants to be predominantly male. But this does not account for the full, more layered and complex picture behind this portrait.

On the other hand, women may be misrecognised at higher rates, as the AI will not have learned to identify women as much as it has learned to identify men. This exposes women to other risks but is also a concern in itself. False positives - identifying someone or something as a target when they are not - are worrisome. But false negatives - not identifying someone or something as a target when they should be - leaves a whole range of potential or very actual threats in the dark: unidentified and unseen. To avoid falling in these blind spots, we need to enhance the accuracy and fairness of facial recognition systems and mitigate discrimination, especially when the outcome could be lethal.

Interaction between human security and EDTs is likely to raise some difficult legal and ethical questions. For example, human enhancement - any kind of alteration of the human body to enhance our physical or mental capabilities – may blur the line between humans and technology. Human rights law, attributing rights to humans as opposed to technology, may therefore need to adapt. Human augmentation threats emanating from states, terrorist groups, criminals, lone actors etc. will also be forced upon us. Developing comprehensive policies and capabilities to address and respond to these threats will be crucial to protect the Alliance, our societies and individuals.

To ensure that NATO retains its technological edge and military advantage, NATO has already agreed a Defence Innovation Accelerator (DIANA), which rests on the principle of inclusion. NATO has also developed an AI Strategy, setting out how the Alliance can securely integrate AI across its capabilities and adapt it to meet its operational requirements. The Principles of Responsible Use (PRUs) applicable to AI were developed in 2021 in parallel to this AI Strategy in order to stress the need for trust and interoperability, as well as the inclusion of a gender perspective in the design of future AI-enabled systems.

In these PRUs, Allies have further emphasised that including gender bias mitigation is critical to ensuring a safe and responsible use of AI. They furthermore include the principles of responsibility and accountability as well as explainability and traceability, which are crucial goals and necessary in order to reveal possible biases.

The PRUs already set a solid basis for good governance. It is important to operationalise them in an effective and responsible manner, and this will be done in consultation with the SGSR-WPS and with the support of IMS Gender Advisor for regular inputs regarding bias mitigation from a gender perspective. The Data and AI Review Board (DARB), which will be set up to operationalise the PRUs, will provide a certification to AI which fulfills these principles of responsible use.

In 2022, the SGSR-WPS Irene Fellin and her team have been working to raise awareness of the nexus between EDTs, gender and human security. It will be important to continue this work by exploring, seeking to understand, knowing how to mitigate or avoid, and raising awareness of the negative implications of biases in AI.

Using these tools, NATO is working to ensure that the implementation plan of EDT strategies appropriately addresses human security and WPS. EDTs are already shaping the world of tomorrow and this world needs to match our values and ethical standards, including gender equality and placing the human at the centre of what we do.
Integrating the Gender Perspective into NATO Single Service Commands:

The Role of Gender Advisors

The NATO 2022 Strategic Concept emphasises the cross-cutting importance of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda across all core tasks and states that NATO will continue to advance gender equality as a reflection of its values. In line with relevant NATO mandates and policies, NATO is integrating UNSCR 1325 and the gender perspective into all of its Command Structure. This is supported through the use of Gender Advisors (GENADs) at strategic, operational and tactical levels. A GENAD is a person who is responsible for providing advice to the commander and the staff on policies from a gender perspective and on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, in accordance with the Alliance’s obligations.

The NATO Command Structure is divided into two principal strategic commands: Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). ACO is responsible for the planning and execution of all NATO operations and ACT is responsible for the management of new programmes to modernise NATO’s capabilities, from Command and Control to logistics and enablers. Under ACO, there are three Single Service Commands (SSCs): Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) in Germany; Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) in Türkiye; and Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) in the United Kingdom.

In order to highlight how the gender perspective is being integrated into the SSCs at NATO, we have asked the GENAD Offices at AIRCOM and LANDCOM what their work entails, the opportunities and challenges they face and the way in which Gender Focal Points support them in achieving their goals.

2. The ability to detect if and when men, women, boys and girls are being affected differently by a situation due to their gender (derived from Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 (Public Version), 2017).
3. Derived from: JTF HQ SOP 106.
4. A nominated person, who has the additional function to facilitate gender mainstreaming into the daily work of their part of an organisation (derived from: Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 (Public Version), 2017).
Flight Sergeant (OR8) Angela McEwan is an analyst and the deputy Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) for AIRCOM. While Flight Sergeant McEwan has no previous experience as a GENAD, she is a qualified Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor for the UK Royal Air Force and was the team lead for the Inclusion and Wellbeing team within AIRCOM.

Aysegul Binali is a NATO International Civilian working for LANDCOM as a Humanitarian Affairs Officer and Alternate GENAD (A/GENAD) specialised in Women, Peace and Security, Children and Armed Conflict and Protection of Civilians. She has 19 years of experience working for international organisations in humanitarian affairs. Before joining NATO, she worked for ten years for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as an International Law Officer in the field of Child Protection and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa. She represented the UN in humanitarian diplomacy between UN specialised agencies, the European Union, NATO, international non-governmental organisations and government authorities.

She is also partaking in a PHD research programme at the University of Amsterdam, which focuses on the identification of early warning indicators to prevent war crimes committed against children. Ms. Binali holds MA degrees in International Relations, European Union, and International Human Rights.
The GENADs serve as advisors to the commander and staff for the integration of the gender perspective in NATO operations, missions and activities. They work to implement direction from NATO mandates and policy on integrating the gender perspective.

Flight Sergeant Angela McEwan highlighted some of the responsibilities of the GENAD office, which include advising the commander and AIRCOM leadership on the gender perspective, planning and monitoring gender-related activities, integrating gender analysis into activities, and liaising within NATO Headquarters (HQ) and with other relevant entities to enhance understanding, co-operation, and application of the gender perspective. Flight Sergeant McEwan is also responsible for providing gender inputs to military planning processes, inter alia, by developing annexes and other gender reports and products.

Aysegul Binali, from LANDCOM, explained that the LANDCOM GENAD Office has three key responsibilities. The first is the mainstreaming of gender perspectives through the inclusion of all staff for equal opportunities, regardless of gender. The second regards the integration of gender perspectives into the planning and execution of operations, missions, tasks and exercises within LANDCOM and with NATO Force Structure through Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL). Finally, the third responsibility is to ensure integrity through a harmonious work environment free from harassment, bullying and discrimination within NATO HQ, and to monitor and report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the area of operations.

There is currently no full time stand-alone GENAD within LANDCOM and AIRCOM. Therefore, the current GENADs are double hatted, meaning they have another primary function in addition to their role as GENAD. The GENAD offices at LANDCOM and AIRCOM bring with them diverse sets of experiences and skills that feed into their work. Thus, aligning their work as GENAD alongside their other duties provides both opportunities and challenges.

**DOUBLE HATTED GENADS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

AIRCOM explained that the tasks and goals of the GENAD Office require a level of initiative, time and planning that takes into consideration their primary roles and the turnover of staff. The Office noted that their “primary roles and the demands will not change, so we need to find the right balance with the help and support of the gender network, in order to succeed”. They explained that, “when working in other operational contexts, quick decisions are normally required with more reacting to events happening as opposed to trying to be proactive with the GENAD role”. Swen Dornig, from LANDCOM, similarly observes that “being double hatted is a big challenge as we work through different subjects each with a variety of responsibilities and subject matter expertise required”.

Nevertheless, with this multi-tasking challenge comes opportunities. The extensive number of cross-cutting topics that require a gender perspective need their own integrity to be respected, and a dedicated expertise to address them is required. Nonetheless, the LANDCOM GENAD Office underlined that their added expertise on cross-cutting topics – such as Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) or Protection of Civilians (POC) – can allow them to address gender issues in an integrated manner, as opposed to treating them in silos. Swen Dornig, double hatted as GENAD and Section Head of Human Security, feels that all pillars of human security have a clear linkage with gender and WPS. “One cannot think of combatting CRSV for example without thinking about the role and participation of women and men, including during peace talks. You have to think of it as one comprehensive topic”, he says. It is important to understand that WPS and human security are complementary and reinforce one another, as recognised in the NATO Human Security Approach and Guiding Principles, which were adopted in 2022.
Aysegul Binali explains that her experience in field operations and HQs has helped her understanding of the complementarity and complexity of Human Security topics such as POC, CAAC, CRSV, Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (CTHB) and WPS. She emphasises that experience from the field must be reflected comprehensively across all operations in order to include communities affected by conflict in the solutions and post-conflict decision-making processes.

**UTILISING GENDER NETWORKS**

The GENAD offices highlighted the important support of the gender advisory network, including Gender Focal Points (GFPs). GFPs are persons who, on top of their primary duties and responsibilities, have the additional function to facilitate gender mainstreaming into the daily work of their part of an organisation.

Aysegul Binali from the LANDCOM GENAD Office notes that “the main difference in responsibility between a GENAD and a GFP is that GENADs lead the efforts of the HQ on integration and mainstreaming of gender perspectives and collate the information from GFPs, who have different subject matter expertise and experience”. She explains that, for thorough planning of an exercise or operation, the HQ needs the contribution of all GFPs, including those from the Medical Advisors’ Office, the Operations, Communications, Training and Exercise division. Those contributions bring essential and irreplaceable knowledge to assess the situation of an Area of Operation. Thus, it is important to ensure that GFPs receive training in order to effectively support the GENAD Office to operationalise gender protocols, and advise key leaders, operators and support units in their respective areas of expertise. Flight Sergeant McEwan stated that, “by having our group of GFPs, fully trained, we can hopefully use this network to cover as much as possible”. She added that, “by also building our relationships with our NATO counterparts, attending meetings and conferences, we should be able to tap into the Gender Network for much needed advice and support”.

**DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

In addition to these structural challenges and advantages, integrating the gender perspective requires overcoming common misconceptions and building greater awareness into what the gender perspective is. Flight Sergeant McEwan highlighted the common misconceptions of gender being limited to women’s issues, with people “deeming it not important in the operational or exercise context and completely failing to realise how gender perspective has a monumental impact on operations”. Rather than being stand-alone, WPS and the gender perspective maximises mission effectiveness best when integrated throughout an organisation to include all levels of authority and operations. She emphasised that the gender perspective should become a ‘norm’ in AIRCOM.

Swen Dornig emphasised that it is important to underline that men have a fundamental role in implementing the WPS agenda. He also pointed out that “one of the most recurrent misconceptions is that gender is only associated with women”, when in reality, gender concerns all sexes. Training and gender awareness weeks try to make this point and change the misconception. As an example, while CRSV may disproportionately target girls and women, it also affects men and boys, and impacts on them must also be considered. The likelihood of being subject to CRSV increases when detained, and a large majority of children detained for association with armed groups are boys.

The lack of understanding of the concept of gender also explains why a GENAD for the military, as a role and position, is often misperceived. For this reason, increasing awareness on the scope of gender and the role of GENADs is critical.

**IN CONCLUSION**

Understanding and responding to NATO’s challenges has become increasingly complex and requires analysis that includes the gender perspective. NATO recognises that women, men, boys and girls are impacted differently by various security challenges and, at the same time, may have differentiated roles in the response to these challenges. Thus, GENADs in the SSCs allow NATO to move policy into practice. Their roles are critical in establishing the gender perspective as a tool to increase operational effectiveness. The gender perspective is necessarily relevant in all forms of military engagement, peacekeeping, upstream conflict prevention or post-conflict reconstruction because gender dynamics inherently impact the societies in which we operate.
Women, Peace & Security

Women and children bear the biggest brunt when violent conflict destabilises communities.

Education is one of the most powerful tools we have against poverty and gender inequality. But all over the world, conflict, prejudice, child marriage and gender violence contribute to keeping girls out of classrooms.

For each school year that a girl misses out on, her future earning potential decreases, and her chances of experiencing gender violence, prejudice, child marriage, and poverty increase. In turn, our planet misses out on the leaders, innovators, and scientists those girls could have been.

Our challenge for the future is to find ways to make sure women fulfil their full potential – not just in conflict areas, but as the leaders, innovators, peace makers and problem solvers the world needs.
FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the content of this edition of the WPS and HS Bulletin, please contact the Human Security Unit:

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