



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON
Women, Peace and Security, and the Conflict Cycle

Delivered by Military Adviser Arne H. Knapskog at the Joint Forum for Security
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Thank you, Chairman,

We thank the Chairs for convening this meeting today and for choosing a very relevant topic to discuss. We also thank the distinguished Speakers for their insightful presentations and views.

Mr. Chair, dear colleagues,

As we meet today at a Joint FSC-PC on International Women's Day, it becomes impossible to reflect on the status of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda without seeing it through the lens of the women and girls in Ukraine.

In the one year since Russia began its brutal and unjustified war, we have become familiar with countless stories and images of Ukrainian women and girls, stories which paint an all too familiar picture of women's devastating experiences during war.

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In late February 2022, the first reports of gender-based violence began appearing in international news reports. From Bucha, to Kherson, to Kalyta, women described the systematic and deliberate use of rape as a weapon of war.

On March 9th, the world saw the photo of a pregnant woman being carried out of a building following the heavy bombardment of Mariupol. We would later learn that both the woman, and her unborn child, had died.

Already on the first day of the invasion, women volunteers came out in droves. By September, tens of thousands of women served in the Ukrainian Armed Forces in combat and non-combat roles. The news reports from the frontlines showcased these women's bravery. At first, they made do with men's uniforms and boots, and we saw photos of women learning to use AK-47s, wearing bullet proof vests that were designed for men's bodies.

But the shelling and shots fired at the front did not discriminate between women and men, and the Ukrainian Armed Forces was unprepared for this influx of women volunteers. As is the case in the Armed Forces of most European countries, to this day, women are rarely equipped with proper equipment and clothing. A Ukrainian women-led nonprofit group was founded after hearing of this from their relatives, friends and loved ones at the front, and now produces and supplies clothes for women soldiers.

These are but some of the many stories of how Russia's brutal war has affected women and girls. The world has witnessed their suffering, their hardship, but also their bravery. We must remind ourselves that we cannot view Ukrainian women and girls as mere victims. This is to deny them their agency, and to disregard the critical role they have, and continue to, play in the security sector, in humanitarian efforts, and in peacebuilding work. It would be a disservice to the women soldiers on the frontline, the women police

officers, the women human rights defenders, to paint them as helpless bystanders.

We must, in this regard, also acknowledge women's important role as agents of peace, including in peacemaking efforts, in post-war reconstruction, as well as in other phases of the conflict cycle.

Mr. Chair,

International Women's Day is a day of celebration; a day to honor women and girls worldwide, and to commemorate those who fought for women's rights. But this day also stands as a stark reminder of the work we have ahead of us.

It has been over twenty years since UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted. We have, in this time, reached many important milestones: as of 2020, over 60 percent of OSCE Participating States have National Action Plans on the 1325; and every day, OSCE institutions and field missions carry out indispensable work on the ground, including with women peacebuilders, and mediators.

At the same time, we must all look to our national policies, and acknowledge shortcomings. In Norway, surveys within our Armed Forces reveal that harassment and sexual violence still constitute an issue within our forces. Just as in Ukraine, Norwegian women in the Armed Forces are still not being provided uniforms and equipment that fit their bodies.

We recognize these failings, and continue to work tirelessly to ensure that women can be equally, and meaningfully included in the security sector without fears of harassment, violence, and – quite simply – without the fear of having one's security jeopardized because equipment does not fit. As previously stated, bullets do not differentiate between genders.

To conclude, as we look ahead, we must continue to push for women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in matters of peace and security, including in all stages of the conflict cycle. One day, Russia's war in Ukraine will come to an end. And when this day comes, we must recall the stories of Ukrainian women soldiers, the women peacebuilders, the human rights defenders, and remember that these women are not powerless.

Ukrainian women must be represented at the highest levels of decision-making and political leadership, and must be equally and meaningfully represented in any potential peace process. At the post-conflict rehabilitation stage, women, too, must be included, to ensure that the gender perspective is integrated into post-conflict work.

This is the only path to a just, and durable peace.

Thank you.