Response by the Republic of Lithuania

to the request by the UN Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on ways and means of promoting the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control,
on the basis of Paragraph 6 of the UN General Assembly resolution 67/48 “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”

Lithuania warmly welcomed the initiative by Trinidad and Tobago to table resolutions “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control” at the 2010 and 2012 sessions of the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) of the United Nations General Assembly. Lithuania co-sponsored both resolutions and was very pleased when they were adopted by consensus.

Lithuania fully associates itself with the common response provided by the European Union.

The initiatives related to the role of women in peace and security, including disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, are significant to Lithuania both in terms of strengthening the role of women in the Lithuanian society and promoting the importance of this issue in the international framework. Our support to such action is also a sign of recognition of the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament measures, reducing and preventing armed conflict and armed violence, and to developing disarmament and non-proliferation policies and programmes.

Our response will first focus on national measures adopted by Lithuania to increase participation of women in the field covered by the Resolution 67/48 and then reflect on our initiatives in international and regional arenas.

Implementation measures on a national level

Lithuania is of the view that adoption of national framework documents should be the first step that States should take in order to identify concrete ways in which the effective participation of women could be supported and strengthened. In order to facilitate development of such documents, development of National Action Plans, such as adopted to implement UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, should be encouraged.

In the field of international security, including disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, Lithuania has adopted a number of documents aimed at strengthening the role of women:

1 Information and documents related to implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 in Lithuania are available at http://www.urm.lt/index.php?921391448 (in English).
- Gender equality in the national defence system was first included in the National programme on equality between women and men of 2010-2014\(^2\). The programme addresses the issue that despite formal recognition of equality between men and women in the national defence system, most senior and decision-making positions were occupied by men. In connection to this, the following activities were undertaken:

  * in 2011, the study, emphasising gender equality issues in national defence system institutions, was produced and published\(^3\)
  
  * in 2012, three training sessions on equal opportunities between women and men were organized for civil servants and employees of Ministry of National Defence.

- On 28 December 2011, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted; the objectives of the Plan include:

  * to motivate women to work in the fields of prevention of conflicts in national, regional and international institutions, to take part in international military and civilian operations and missions and, when participating there, to pay greater attention to solving the problems of local women;
  
  * to educate and to train the personnel of institutions on the issues raised in the UNSC Resolution 1325;
  
  * to actively contribute to international initiatives supporting and implementing the UNSC Resolution 1325 and its supplementing documents, particularly in the fields of women’s security and protection of women’s rights.

- On 9 March 2012, the National Plan of Action for Implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 in the National Defence System of Lithuania\(^4\) was adopted; the plan includes the following measures:

  * meetings, lectures and other social events for local women and their organizations in the areas where Lithuanian armed forces are deployed as part of international missions;
  
  * courses for military personnel on the issues related to UNSC Resolution 1325 before deployment to international operations;
  
  * supplementing curricula of the Military Academy with issues related to women, peace and security;

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* conducting a survey on a possible cases of sexual harassment in the Lithuanian Armed Forces, as well as evaluating the complaints procedure;

* conducting a survey on the views of employees of the national defence system with regard to equal opportunities among men and women.

On 24 May 2012, the seminar on the national implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 was held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was agreed that it was necessary to disseminate information about the principles of the resolution and to further develop the national plan of measures. According to the participants of the seminar, the governmental and non-governmental sectors should continue to strengthen cooperation in the field of the implementation of the resolution, share ideas and support one another when pursuing joint activities.

Maintaining momentum at the international and regional levels

Lithuania is consistently raising gender related issues at various UN forums, including open debates of the UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security (30 November 2012 and 17 April 2013) and Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts (12 February 2013), as well as at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (27 February – 7 March 2013)\(^5\).

Lithuania welcomed the adoption and was among the first signatories of the Arms Trade Treaty. Throughout the negotiations, we have supported inclusion of norms that would prevent transfers that could be used to perpetrate acts of gender-based and sexual violence. Therefore we are glad that gender based violence and violence against women and children were explicitly included among the mandatory export assessment criteria. We remain impressed by the support that this issue gathered during the conference and urge all parties involved to quickly translate it into action.

In the Second Review Conference of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in New York on 27 August – 7 September 2012, Lithuania, inter alia, called to take due account of gender and age in the context of small arms in order to understand the different ways in which men, women and children are affected by armed violence and to develop effective solutions.

Emphasizing importance of women in international peace and security is no less important on the regional level. Implementation of relevant resolutions on women and disarmament is essential in regions experiencing or coming out of conflicts, as part of peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. Women should be involved in every stage of these processes as negotiators, heads of missions and experts.

\(^5\) Lithuanian national statements in United Nations are available online at: [http://un.mfa.lt](http://un.mfa.lt).
On 30 June 2011, following the initiative of presidents of Lithuania and Finland, more than 130 women and men – including from 44 countries – gathered in Vilnius for a high-level conference entitled “Women Enhancing Democracy: Best Practices”\(^6\). The participants agreed that despite the challenge posed by the low numbers of women in government, their role in high-level government positions is incredibly important and transformative.

As Chairman-in-office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2011 and the Chairman of the OSCE Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) in May-August 2013, Lithuania presented and supported a number of initiatives related to women in security and in particular arms control. The Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 on Elements of the Conflict Cycle of 7 December 2011 reaffirms the significant role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and urges States to ensure increasing representation of women at all levels in conflict resolution and peace processes. The Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/11 on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere of 7 December 2011, inter alia, calls States to develop and strengthen measures that lead to increased diversification in sectors that are traditionally male-dominated. In the framework of the FSC, Lithuania was one of the countries to call for inclusion of gender-related questions in the annual Questionnaire on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, submitted by OSCE Member States.

Finally, States should increase their cooperation with non-governmental organisations and civil society, as well as encourage national actors to start addressing issues related to participation of women in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. States should be transparent in sharing information with NGO community and take due account to their recommendations.