Abstract:
Swiss foreign policy in the domain of peace and security endorses an approach that is gender-sensitive and that considers the different needs of women and men in an adequate and appropriate manner. Gender equality is an important cornerstone in the pursuit of sustainable, resilient and lasting peace. In this context, the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, the reinforcement of their human rights and the encouragement of their participation in peace and other political processes are paramount.
Switzerland includes gender sensitive approaches in all its peace and security policy endeavors as well as in operational programmes. It thereby sensitizes its partners to be equally attentive to gender issues in their projects. The gender perspective is thus well embedded in Swiss disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control endeavors, which fall under the national peace and security policy. Switzerland has also developed a National Action Plan on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. In a whole of government approach, all relevant actors of the Swiss Confederation have committed to concrete measures which are regularly monitored and reviewed. This includes gender sensitive budgeting for programmes supported by Switzerland and projects in the domain of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control as well as measures to increase the number of women in disarmament affairs.
Switzerland regularly addresses gender issues in its statements in multilateral fora, be it in the framework of the United Nations or in the context of other relevant disarmament regimes. For instance, Switzerland embedded strong gender dimensions in its strategies regarding Mine Action and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Furthermore, Switzerland is a strong promoter of gender inclusive approaches in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and in international SALW instruments. Finally, Switzerland welcomes the inclusion of gender-specific considerations in the discourse on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

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Generally, Switzerland strives to include gender sensitive approaches into all its peace and security policy endeavours as well as in operational programmes, thereby sensitizing its partners to be equally attentive in their projects. The gender perspective is thus well embedded in Swiss endeavours of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which fall under the peace and security policy. Switzerland has also developed a National Action Plan on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. In a whole of government approach, all relevant actors of the Swiss Confederation have committed to concrete measures.
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For example, in its Mine Action Strategy (2012 – 2015), Switzerland embedded gender sensitivity and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 in its policy and operational activity as one of six guiding principles. Furthermore, Switzerland is one of the main sponsors of the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP), a non-governmental organisation which raises awareness on the importance of taking into considerations the different needs, priorities, capabilities and knowledge of women, girls, boys and men affected by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

Another vital domain of Swiss endeavours with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control is the Swiss strategy on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). The misuse and illicit trade of SALW affects men and women alike, yet often in different forms. Switzerland does acknowledge this fact and therefore promotes the mainstreaming of gender issues in its policy and operational activities, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Switzerland is one of the main promoters of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. In this framework, Switzerland acts as a strong promoter of gender inclusive approaches. In both ministerial review conferences of the Geneva Declaration, gender-specific questions were addressed throughout the thematic field of armed violence. Although men between 15 and 29 bear the highest risk of falling victim to armed violence, measured against the amount of weapons in their possession, women and children fall disproportionally often victim to armed violence. Hence, Switzerland supports gender sensitive armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives.

It has been known for a long time that small arms and light weapons (SALW) play an important role as drivers of violence against women and gender based violence both in conflict and non-conflict settings as well as situations of urban violence and violence in private households. Some relevant SALW instruments, such as the Firearms Protocol and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects include references to gender aspects of the use and (illicit) trade of SALW. Switzerland is committed to defend the inclusion of gender references in such frameworks.

Against this background, Switzerland is pleased to see gender aspects being firmly anchored in the text of the legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Switzerland welcomes the inclusion of a legally-binding provision on preventing armed gender-based violence in the ATT and hopes that the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children will be assessed during licensing procedures and arms exports.
Finally, Switzerland has been a promoter of reframing the traditional, at times “technostrategic” discourse on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation that dominated discussions over many years. A stronger emphasis of the human security dimension and the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons is a positive recent development. Switzerland particularly welcomes the establishment of new discussion fora that are more inclusive in format and composition, allowing for input by civil society representatives, and is convinced that the inclusion of gender-specific considerations will be helpful on the way to abolishing nuclear weapons.