Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control: The role of the United Nations

By

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At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation for the invitation to offer remarks here today. Additionally, I thank the VIC and other organizers for their commitment to underscoring the role of women in professions related to international security.

It is appropriate that we are here for a discussion on the role of women in disarmament in Vienna—a hub of international activity for the United Nations. The United Nations plays an important role in advancing norms and setting standards for the various components of gender equality, including elimination of gender discrimination and the empowerment of women.

While gender equality has been germane to the mandate of the United Nations since its inception, representation of women at the United Nations has accelerated over the decades. Ms. Elena Văcărescu, Permanent Delegate of Romania to the League of Nations, was the only woman to serve with the rank of Ambassador in the history of the League of Nations. Today, the United Nations has seen three female Presidents of the General Assembly, a standalone Secretariat entity dedicated to gender equality (UN-Women) and an increasing number of female Permanent Representatives representing their Governments in New York, Geneva, Vienna and around the world.\(^1\)

In addition to increasing the representation of women at the United Nations, the international community has recognized that the role of women in sustaining international peace and security is crucial. This recognition was reinforced with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Allow me now to turn specifically to the role of women in disarmament, a key component of international peace and security, and the work of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

UNODA seeks to ensure that a gender perspective is well reflected in all departmental practices, policies and programmes. I am pleased to acknowledge that UNODA was the first UN entity to adopt a gender mainstreaming action plan.

The General Assembly first recognized the importance of gender-sensitive disarmament in 2010 through adoption of resolution 65/59. In 2012, the Assembly adopted an expanded resolution (67/48) that encourages women’s participation in all disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control decision-making processes and calls for special attention to be paid to the valuable contribution women can make to practical disarmament measures at the local, regional and national levels. The resolution was once again adopted at the 68\(^{th}\) session of the General Assembly as resolution 68/33. While UNODA supports all aspects of the women and disarmament nexus, the gender dimensions of small arms control are particularly salient.

A significant gain in addressing this linkage was the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Adopted in 2013, the ATT is the first international treaty to recognize the link between international arms transfers and gender-based violence.

\(^1\) **Female Presidents of the General Assembly**: Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (India, 8\(^{th}\) session, 1953); Ms. Angie E. Brooks (Liberia, 24\(^{th}\) session, 1969); Ms. Sheika Haya Rashed Al Khalifa (Bahrain, 61\(^{st}\) session, 2006). There are currently 31 female Permanent Representatives and/or charge d’affaires in New York as of March 2014; As of October 2004, there were 14 women Ambassadors in Vienna.
Likewise, Security Council resolution 570 adopted in 2013, the first resolution adopted in the Security Council on the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, explicitly recognizes the role played by small arms in the commission of sexual and gender-based violence.

Bearing in mind these resolutions, it is clear that the various organs of the United Nations are working to address the many gender implications of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Allow me to conclude by underscoring the work currently undertaken by the UNODA regional centres with regards to implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/33 on women and disarmament.

The UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), the UNODA regional office located in Lima, has implemented a number of trainings on small arms control specifically tailored for women officers of security forces. In 2013, UNLIREC organized a ‘Women-Only-Training Course to Combat the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives’ (WOT-IITC) in San Salvador, El Salvador. The training sought to increase the opportunities for women officials to access specialized training.

Moreover, UNLIREC is rolling out a new gender proposal aimed at building momentum and state capacity for the regional implementation of resolution 68/33. UNLIREC has called upon various national entities to provide expertise and statistical information, such as women’s Ministries, national observatories, civil society organizations, and international entities in the recipient State, with a view to ensuring full implementation of the resolution.

I am pleased to report on such work that directly contributes to increasing the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

With these remarks, I wish to thank you for your attention and your commitment to gender equality.