



THE SPIRIT OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS: ADVANCING SOCIETY

Remarks by Ms Marriët Schuurman, NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, at WIP Global Summit 2016 (4-6 May 2016; Parliament of Jordan, Amman, Jordan) at the Plenary Panel: “The Promise of Peace - the Impact of Women on Conflict Prevention, Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution”

Much has been said already about the **why** of enhancing the role of women in preventing and resolving conflict, in peace-making and peacekeeping. Let me focus on the how: if there would be only one thing we should do to increase the impact of women on keeping the peace, what would that be? What would be the magic wand?

From my experience as NATO’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, I would say that that one thing is: **Learn to Listen** - with an open mind and open ear, without assuming, and without boxing women. Which is easier said than done, as reality seems easier to handle when we box things and people. When we can ‘box’ also women, either as victims, as mothers, as jihadi brides or as foreign fighters - to name a few. But the uncomfortable truth, particularly for peacebuilders and peacekeepers, is that women are not only vulnerable victims who need our protection, but first of all agents - in their own right, and individuality: full members of society who have an equal right to a seat at the table; whose experience, knowledge and aspirations are as valuable as those of the male half of the population.

Bringing those experiences and aspirations to the table may seem to complicate peace processes, but in reality results in more comprehensive, more inclusive and lasting solutions. There now is ample evidence of the effectiveness of being inclusive.

And still, the global study on 15 years of implementing UNSCR 1325 demonstrates that we are far from achieving the Resolution’s aim of inclusive and lasting peace and security. A lot of attention has been given to protection, but little to the other two Ps of the Resolution: Prevention of conflict and equal Participation, at all levels of decision-making, from conflict prevention to conflict management and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

Hence, at the fifteenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2242. I like to call that the ‘Back to Basics Resolution’, as it reminds us of the BASICS of UNSCR 1325, notably that the only way to prevent and protect is to empower women, and that gender equality should be core to all our peace and security strategies. Because we can only be free, secure and at peace when we are inclusive and use the full potential our societies have to offer to strengthen the resilience of those societies.

UNSCR 2242 forces us to go back to basics, and reaffirm gender equality as fundamental to lasting peace and a hard core security interest. ‘Back to basics’ also means that promoting equal participation in decision-making and incorporating gender perspectives in our security strategies should be core business for every security provider and professional, be it military or civilian, national or international.

That is what we try to realise at NATO: making gender equality core business. Let me now get back to the **'how'**. How can we foster equal participation, and strengthen the role of women as agents in their own right?

By securing an enabling environment, as we did through the training of Afghan female searchers and election monitors - allowing Afghan women to come out and vote, resulting in a historically high turn-out of female voters in the last presidential elections.

- By expressing our political support to women's equal participation.
- By providing practical support, financial or logistical, for the active participation of women - like NATO's Jordan III TF which among other things assists in building appropriate training facilities for Jordan servicewomen.
- By providing platforms, for instance through conferences that give women a voice.
- By our leaders engaging with women leaders and representatives.
- By leading by example, by being inclusive ourselves and involve women professionals -also as role models.

But it all starts with recognising the agency of women; with the right person asking the right questions to the right persons; and then to listen.