

Keynote Presentation

by

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on

*“Women’s Contribution to Global Peace in
Implementing UNSCR 1325
on Women and Peace and Security”*

organized by

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- Ms Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe and Chair of our meeting this afternoon;
- Madame Sirikka-Liisa Anttila, Deputy Leader of Delegation of Finland to the Parliamentary Assembly of CoE;
- Ms Anje Wiersinga, Chair of the Working Group organizing the present event; and, of course,
- Longtime advocate for 1325 Rajaa Altalli of the UN's Syrian Women's Advisory Board;

My greetings to you all!

Peace is integral to human existence — in everything we do, in everything we say and in every thought we have, there is a place for peace.

One soul-stirring inspiration that I have experienced and internalized from my work for the culture of peace is that we should never forget that when women – half of world's seven plus billion people - are marginalized, there is no chance for

our world to get sustainable peace in the real sense. It is my strong belief that unless women are engaged in advancing the culture of peace at equal levels at all times with men, sustainable peace would continue to elude us. In peace negotiations, women are evidently perceived as bridge builders between parties in conflict. I believe that in building peace, gender equality play a more important role than democracy or economic growth.

My work has taken me to the farthest corners of the world and I have seen time and again the centrality of the culture of peace and women's equality in our lives. This realization has now become more pertinent in the midst of the ever-increasing militarism and militarization that is destroying both our planet and our people.

Women bring a new breadth, quality and balance of vision to our common effort to move away from the cult of war towards the culture of peace. Women's equality makes our planet safe and secure. For a long time, there has been an

impression of women as helpless victims of wars and conflicts.

The most significant development since the 1995 fourth world conference on women under the United Nations umbrella in Beijing have been the adoption of the UN Security Council's history-making resolution 1325 on "Women and Peace and Security".

The core message of 1325 is an integral part of my intellectual existence and my humble contribution to a better world for each one of us. To trace back, 18 years ago, on the International Women's Day in 2000, as the President of the Security Council, following extensive stonewalling and intense resistance from the permanent members, I was able to issue, on behalf of the 15 members of the Council, an agreed statement that formally brought to global attention the role and contribution women have been making towards the prevention of conflict and building of peace. That had remained unrecognized, underutilized and

undervalued by the Security Council since its very existence.

The Council recognized in that statement that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men, and affirmed the value of full and equal participation of women at all decision-making levels. That is when the seed for Resolution 1325 was sown.

Following this conceptual and political breakthrough, the formal resolution was adopted on 31 October of the same year after seven months of difficult negotiations.

Adoption of 1325 opened a much-awaited door of opportunity for women who have shown time and again that they bring a qualitative improvement in structuring peace and in post-conflict architecture. When women participate in peace negotiations and in the crafting of a peace agreement, they have the broader and long-term interest of society in mind. My colleagues from

Syria and the two parts of Cyprus will elaborate in their respective presentations.

I recall proudly that in choosing the three women laureates for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, the citation referred to 1325 saying that “It underlined the need for women to become participants on an equal footing with men in peace processes and in peace work in general.”

The Nobel Committee further asserted that “We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society.” 1325 is the only UN resolution so specifically noted in any citation of the Nobel Prize.

The driving force behind 1325 is “participation”. That is why women need to be at the peace tables, women need to be involved in the decision-making at all levels to ensure real and faithful implementation of 1325.

Gender perspectives must be fully integrated into the terms of reference of peace operations by

the United Nations. A no-tolerance, no-impunity approach is a must in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and regional peacekeepers. UN is welcomed in countries as their protectors – they cannot become the perpetrators themselves!

I also believe that the historic and operational value of the resolution has been undercut by the disappointing record of its implementation, particularly for lack of national level commitments.

As we approach the 18th anniversary of the resolution's adoption next October, it is truly disappointing that a mere 75 countries out of 193 members of the UN have prepared their National Action Plans (NAPs) for 1325 implementation. There are no better ways to get country level commitment to implement 1325 other than the NAPs. Only NAPs can hold the governments accountable. There is a clear need for the Secretary-General's genuinely active and dedicated engagement in using the moral authority of the

United Nations and the high office that he occupies for the effective implementation of 1325.

I believe strongly that we would not have to be worrying about countering extremism if women have equality in decision-making enabling them to take measures which would prevent such extremism.

I recall Eleanor Roosevelt's words saying "Too often the crucial decisions are originated and given shape in bodies made up wholly of men, or so completely dominated by them that whatever of special value women have to offer is shunted aside without expression." Reiterating this assertion, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said very succinctly that "The truth is that north and south, east and west – and I'm not speaking about any society, culture or country in particular – everywhere, we still have a male-dominated culture."

It is a reality that politics, more so security, is a man's world. Empowering women's political

leadership will have ripple effects on every level of society. When politically empowered, women bring important and different skills and perspectives to the policy making table in comparison to their male counterparts. Women are the real agents of change in refashioning peace structures ensuring greater sustainability. The slogan of the Global Campaign on Women and Peace and Security which we launched in London in June 2014 reiterates “If we are serious about peace, we must take women seriously”.

Globally only one in five Parliamentarians is a woman, and there are nearly 40 countries in which women account for less than ten percent of Parliamentarians. This marginalization of women from the political sphere is unfortunate and unacceptable. I underscore often that when women join politics, they want to DO something, when men join politics, they want to BE something.

Patriarchy and misogyny are the dual scourges pulling back the humanity away from our aspiration for a better world. Unless we confront these vicious and obstinate negative forces with all our energy,

determination and persistence, our planet will never be a desired place for one and all.

We are experiencing around the globe an organized, determined rollback of the gains made as well as new attacks on women's equality and empowerment. Yes, this is happening in all parts of the world and in all countries without exception. In the same vein, last Friday, in its report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice warned that women's rights are under threat from a "backlash" of conservatism and fundamentalism around the world.

That global reality is dramatically evidenced in the fact that the UN itself despite being the biggest champion of women's equality has failed to elect a woman secretary-general in 2016 to reverse the historical injustice of having the post occupied by men for its more than seven-decades of existence.

Let me join humbly my voice to the assertion by the architect of feminist foreign policy, Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom, that

“Feminism is a component of a modern view on global politics, not an idealistic departure from it. It is about smart policy which includes whole populations, uses all potential and leaves no one behind.”

I am proud to be a feminist. All of us need to be. That is how we make our planet a better place to live for all. We should always remember that without peace, development is impossible, and without development, peace is not achievable, but without women, neither peace nor development is conceivable.
