

# Event on Women, Peace and Security

Address by: Mrs Maria Henriette SCHUURMAN

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*Panel discussion on 'International Framework: latest development'*

First, allow me to thank the government of Italy for hosting this event today, at the occasion of the launch of its second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

I would also like to express my gratitude to Italy's continuous support to the implementation of NATO's revised Policy and Action Plan on WPS, by contributing both budget for the implementation as well as manpower and expertise. And moreover, by consistently integrating a gender perspective in day-to-day work, also at the NATO negotiation tables. By actively promoting active and meaningful participation of women in those negotiation and decision making processes. Including by having nominated an excellent, female Italian representative to NATO.

As your Chief of Staff reminded us: our credibility depends on us leading by example, and that is exactly what Italy is doing when it comes to furthering an active and equal role of women in matters of peace and security.

I would like to commend Italy for its new NAP: it is focused, specific and prioritizes actions to be taken *at home*, internally. It demonstrates a clear commitment to move beyond nice statement of principle to real action on the ground: a commitment to walk the talk.

This matches well with the joint agenda NATO and its Allies and Partners, well over 50 Nations, have set themselves in the revised WPS Policy and Action Plan. In the almost 15 years since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security the normative framework has been set, the groundwork has

been done, in terms of creating standards and structures. Now is the time for implementation, for translating principles into practice, intentions into reality.

The challenge ahead indeed is to implement and to sustain our efforts and achievements. In a constantly changing security situation, and beyond peace keeping operations, such as in Afghanistan or Kosovo. Since the WPS agenda is broader than peace keeping operations: we have to lift it to ALL core tasks of NATO, to apply a gender perspective in our *daily* security activities - be it collective defense, cooperative security or crisis management. That is the task we set ourselves as NATO and Allies.

In my view, these are the key challenges remaining in achieving this joint ambition:

- We need to further *institutionalize* the agenda in our core security structures: applying a gender perspective should not be a nice add-on in times of peace but a hindrance in times of war, nor an afterthought, but part of our *core* procedures and processes.

- We need to truly *internalize* a gender perspective throughout our organizations: our gender sensitivity should no longer depend on a handful 'believers' or 'converted' but it should be part and parcel of the knowledge, skills and attitudes we expect from any peace and security *professional*, male or female, civilian or military.

- We need to further increase our awareness and *knowledge*, through education, training, exercises, monitoring, and exchange of best practices and lessons learnt.

- We need to encourage and assist *Nations* in delivering on this joint agenda, through practical cooperation, partnerships, capacity building, exchange of lessons and expertise.

The good news is that the means to overcome these challenges are within our reach. In my view, the keys to our success are:

- Partnership, concerted effort, and complementarity - not competition. Practical cooperation with Nations, other international organisations AND civil society - at the global as well as local level. Since it is civil society that fosters leadership, provides extensive knowledge, and holds us to account.

- Continued training, education, exercises and communication.
- Committed leadership, with vision, stamina and endurance: at all levels, at headquarters, and in the field.

Today is the International Day against Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)..

Sexual and Gender Based Violence in conflict unfortunately is nothing new, it has been a tactic of war for centuries. We have not been very successful in eradicating this ‘cancer’. Please allow me to share some general ideas on how we can do better:

- By improving access to justice: we need to stop impunity.
- By taking away the stigma from the survivors: ensure their access to health care, psychological support, reintegration and community support, their economic independence and empowerment.
- By strengthening our knowledge base: on types, indicators, and preventive measures.
- Again: through training and exercises, awareness raising and practical guidance for field staff on how to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.
- Also: through codes of conduct for our own staff and by ensuring a safe working environment for our own men and women, allowing us to recruit *and* retain a diverse and professional workforce.

Let me conclude however, by stressing that women and girls are more than victims. They are also assets, actors and often powerful advocates for peace and reconciliation. Too often, they remain an untapped resource.

We often say: ‘No peace without justice’.

I would add: ‘No peace without women.’

Our actions should not only focus on Protection but first and foremost on equal Participation, also when it comes to our peace and security.

Empowering women improves our success rate in creating lasting peace and security, resilient communities.

Equal and meaningful participation, also in our own structures, is a matter of principle, of credibility, of professionalism AND of effectiveness.

Mixed teams are more creative and perform better.

That also applies to our efforts to achieve lasting peace and security.