



Women peace and security: The role of an Arms Trade Treaty

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Conference Room A

UN General Assembly: First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

How do efforts by the international community address the impact of armed violence in women's lives? Linking an ATT with UN SCR 1325

By Maria Pia Devoto, and delivered by Folade Mutota

Maria Pia Devoto sends her apologies as she cannot be with us today. I will deliver her presentation on behalf of women in our region, the Americas.

Ladies and gentlemen, Chair, and members of the panel

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I have been involved in the Arms Trade Treaty process since it began and I am delighted to share my words with you, and colleagues from the IANSA Women's Network and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The inclusion of specific gender language in international instruments is relatively new, especially the recognition of women's essential and important role in security issues.

UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are the cornerstones of international mandates with regard to the full and equal participation of women in peace and security initiatives.

There is a striking fact:

Small arms are the most widely used instrument in perpetrating violence against women in all contexts - conflict, post-conflict, and formal peace. They are easy to carry, extensively available, and out of control. Sexual violence in Eastern DRC and femicide in Sinaloa, Mexico, are committed with small arms and light weapons. Small arms cause death, injuries, fear, and facilitate all forms of violence against women.

But although women are victims of small arms, 1325 recognises our importance in improving security.

Local women's organisations are often the first to initiate micro-disarmament projects under the banner of creating peace and security. These projects often include awareness-raising and weapons collection components. In this way women have taken leadership roles in peacebuilding work, violence prevention and education about gun violence, and are using 1325 in their disarmament efforts around the world.

The international community is beginning to acknowledge this and take women into account through citing 1325 in existing instruments and processes. These include Resolution 1820 on sexual violence, The Geneva Process, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and my focus today, the Arms Trade Treaty Process.

Although 1325 does not focus specifically on disarmament, and is for conflict and post conflict situations, it contains some specific entry points that are useful to small arms control, policy and strategy development. It is important that we do not only limit our use of 1325 to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR).

Article 8 of 1325 relates to measures that need to be taken to support local women's small arms initiatives through increased capacity-building, provision of resources, and funding. The 2002 Report of the UN Secretary General on 1325 acknowledges the role that women have, including the transborder weapons trade.

But in fact, the specific details of 1325 are not as important as the basic acknowledgement of something that ought to be obvious – women are important in disarmament and security issues. 1325 has been pragmatically interpreted as a framework and there is nothing to stop states adopting policies not directly linked to 1325.

As 1325 provides a framework for a comprehensive approach for conflict management and violence prevention, there is increasing demand for 1325 specific policies and plans of action. So far, 16 UN member states have developed National Action Plans on Resolution 1325. These Plans, while non-binding, provide an opportunity to

link arms transfer controls with women's security. However, only one acknowledges the specific role of preventing gun violence in relation to women, peace and security.

Belgium has made a clear link between 1325 and arms control in its National Action Plan. It links to the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and promotes the proposal of an Arms Trade Treaty. The Plan says "Such a Treaty should contain proper criteria for the export of arms, avoiding that arms could be exported to countries marked by conflicts, internal instability or the non-respect of human rights."

In my region, the Americas, there has also been some progress.

Chile's National Plan of Action supports 1325 as an instrument to guarantee and protect the rights of both women and children in conflict and post conflict situations. It also promotes the participation of local women in peacebuilding processes, including in disarmament initiatives as explicitly stated in Article 13 of Resolution 1325.

In Argentina, the Ministry of Defence is developing a Plan of Action on 1325 which focuses on including a gender perspective in international peacekeeping operations. The Plan highlights the importance of analysing both armed conflict and peacebuilding from a gender perspective, taking into account women's contributions to these processes. The Plan recognises the crucial role of women in armed conflict prevention and resolution, such as promoting social order in communities, and a culture of non violence.

Through further development and, importantly, actual implementation of National Action Plans on 1325, the Resolution can be used to enable women's participation in small arms control policy and practice, including the Arms Trade Treaty Process.

An ATT will form part of a wider set of policies which complement Resolution 1325.

For example, UN General Assembly resolution 60/68 also supports 1325 by calling for "systematically including national measures to regulate small arms in longer term peace building strategies and programmes" based on paragraphs II.2 and III.6 of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms.

Similarly, the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has highlighted the interconnection between small arms, armed violence and development. It commits participating States to support programs on reducing armed violence with a development and human rights perspective. The Declaration promotes a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues as reflected in the provisions of Resolution 1325.

A strong and effective ATT will support and complement the broader goals of 1325 including conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict peace-building with the active involvement and participation of women.

Today during the 2009 First Committee, States are in negotiation about a 2012 negotiating conference. We hope they will soon begin to discuss the criteria that should apply to arms transfers, and this must include gender considerations.

Every day women are suffering from the misuse and abuse of small arms in our homes, communities and countries. The international community, the Security Council, the delegates here in New York, can approve the strongest text to provide the most rigorous provisions in support of women, peace and security.

If States, at national level, do not prioritise the implementation of international instruments, and take into account the role of women in arms control, all the efforts of the international community will be in vain.

We women, at the grassroots, civil society, government and the wider women's movement beyond will continue to work hard and raise awareness, and make our voices heard in the process. We have international law on our side, and can play a crucial role in the ATT process.

The impact is local, the solution is too and we have the power to change. We can't wait, we have to act now.

Thank you.