



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to South Africa

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Press Release

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EU and NATO join forces to make women actors of peace and security

Today Vice-President Margot Wallström and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen hosted a high-level conference on women, peace and security in the European Commission premises. This conference saw the participation of Spanish First Vice-President Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega, Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright alongside civil society representatives, military officials, high-level policy-makers and witnesses. The participants concluded that all EU and NATO-led operations must comply with UN resolutions relating to women, peace and security, and must be supported by appropriate training, education, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

"I wholeheartedly welcome the enhanced cooperation with NATO in the field of women, peace and security, and our joint commitment to push for the implementation of existing international legislation. Only by working together – internationally, regionally and with civil society – we will be able to combat the marginalisation of women which is a real threat to global security", said Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission.

"I have come to realise that the security of women is the best indicator of the security of a nation. Unless we enhance the rights and responsibilities of women globally, our foreign policy goals will remain unachievable, and those we do achieve will turn out to be unsustainable. The provisions of the UN provide us with a strong legal framework for addressing gender based violence. It is now time to turn words into deeds", said Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission.

As highlighted by Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega, 1st Vice-President of the government of Spain, "in conflict areas many battles are fought without guns. Women are often at the forefront of these struggles to ensure decent living conditions for households and communities. One of the aims of the Spanish EU Presidency is to promote women's role in sustainable development and peace building."

According to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "we must empower women and confront victimisation if we are to deal successfully with the security challenges of the 21st century. This is a task not only for NATO, but a challenge that the Alliance, the European Union, and civil society actors must address jointly. I am encouraged by the common approach that we have seen today".

The conference, organised together with the Security and Defence Agenda, was set up as an awareness raising event in view of the upcoming 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and attracted close to 500 participants. Views were exchanged between panellists and participants from the floor on how to end impunity, how to empower women and how to implement existing legislation. Panellists agreed that international actors such as NATO, the EU and the UN play an important role in fully integrating gender perspectives into their actions.

In view of the UN ministerial review conference on women, peace and security in October 2010, the conference concluded that the international community must work harder to ensure full implementation of UN Resolution 1325, and subsequent legislation. This involves stepping up efforts to protect women in conflict zones and to strengthen women's role in peace-keeping operations and peace-building processes by improving gender representation in senior management posts, by reinforcing the use of gender advisers in missions and operations and by supporting civil society activities in these fields.

For further information

<http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Hiddenpages/EventMgt/tabid/542/EventType/EventView/EventId/431/EventDateID/440/PageID/1900/WomenPeaceSecurity.aspx>

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