

Conference on Disarmament

Statement Austria

10.3.2020

Mr. President,

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of gender and disarmament today. We also wish to thank Argentina for their non-paper, which provided useful food for thought and actionable recommendations. I also wish to thank the Secretary General of the CD and UNIDIR for the insightful contributions.

This year the international community pays tribute to the 20th anniversary of the UN-SC-Res. 1325 on Women, Peace and Security - the first UN resolution to highlight the particular impact of conflict on women and to affirm the importance of the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning and peacekeeping operations. Austria regularly reports upon implementation of UN-SC-Res. 1325, most recently the Austrian government adopted the tenth Implementation Report on the National Action Plan in October 2019. It is a fact that women, men, girls and boys are differentially impacted by armed conflict, and by specific weapons.

Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. We also would like to recall the joint statement on gender perspectives during 2019 first committee endorsed by 80 delegations, including my own. In our national capacity, I wish to focus today on two dimensions: First, equal participation of women and men and second, the gendered impact of specific types of weapons.

First, equal participation of women and men in international security fora remains to be achieved. Austria joins the concerns expressed by the Secretary General in his disarmament agenda. As eloquently outlined by previous speakers and UNIDIR moments ago, there continues to be a significant gender imbalance in multilateral disarmament policy design, setting and implementation. Austria reiterates that equal representation is mutually beneficial and we remain firmly committed to continue to take action in all relevant for a towards that end.

Second, a gender sensitive perspective to disarmament encompasses to properly take into account gender-based vulnerabilities to effectively prevent human suffering. For the sake of brevity I would just like to give two very concrete examples.

A report by gender in mine action group stated that civilian casualties in explosive hazard incidents in 2017 were 51% men, 35% boys, and 7% women and 7% girls. Humanity and Inclusion had previously reported that 80% of cluster munition victims are male, while 30% are boys. Reasons for the disproportionate impact are manifold, but exploring them is critical to prevent human suffering during and after armed conflict. An obvious example for an

effective impact of a gendered perspective in our disarmament efforts in such a case are need-tailored risk awareness programs provided to the most vulnerable groups.

Another important dimension is the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on girls and women. Over the past years, more and more studies were conducted on how the consequences of nuclear weapon detonations affect men and women differently. At the Vienna Conference on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons for example, Mary Olsen, Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS), presented her findings that a woman is at significantly greater risk of suffering and dying from radiation-induced cancer than a man who gets the same dose of ionizing radiation. Additionally, age at radiation exposure also plays a significant role. But as it is well known, radiation exposure does not only possibly result in cancer, but also increases the risk of other health deficits such as reduced immunity, reduced fertility, increases in other diseases including heart disease, birth defects including mental retardation, heart defects, etc. These facts led to the recognition of the gendered impact of ionizing radiation in the TPNW.

Mr. President,

Austria continues to support putting the human at the center of our efforts. A gendered perspective to disarmament allows us to develop and identify more effective policy and implementation tools, by taking particular vulnerabilities duly into account.