

UNSCR 1325 – UK Presentation on National Action Plan

Welcome

- I'm Alastair Long, the human rights specialist of the UK delegation to the OSCE.
- I am very grateful to the Spanish Chairmanship for the invitation to address you today. In particular on two counts:
 - First, we believe the OSCE, as a regional security organisation, has an important role to play in the promotion and further implementation of UNSCR 1325. It is of course the premise of 1325 that the inclusion of women, their experience and perspectives, in addressing security questions helps to build stability and sustainable development. This message still needs to be heard, I'd say by the majority of those involved in the security sector including in the OSCE, and I commend the Chairmanship for the political support it has shown to this by convening this event today.
 - Secondly, the UK was a driving force behind the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* in October 2000.

It is following the UK's strong interest in 1325 that I would like to say something today about our national action plan developed in March 2006. We will all agree that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to the mainstreaming of SCR 1325 into all national policies and programmes but hope that some of what we have experienced in the UK will be of interest.

Introduction to Action Plan

- In our view, sustained and systematic effort is required to implement SCR 1325 at the national level. We concluded that in the UK, a National Action Plan, setting out clear action for government personnel and departments was a crucial means to ensuring gender was properly mainstreamed into all government policies.
- The decision to develop an Action Plan was itself a key development. It was a decision made jointly by our Foreign, Defence and Development Ministries. Prior to this, each department had addressed SCR 1325 individually with varying degrees of success. Much gender related work had been undertaken by the various government departments but no one was entirely sure just how much, and whether there were gaps in the work that had arisen on the assumption by one department that work was being covered by another.
- Developing a National Action Plan requires thorough cross-departmental discussion, preparation and awareness raising. Although one, or two,

ministries can lead the development of the Plan, it needs the approval and understanding of the wider government community.

- To start the process we established an interdepartmental working group whose first step was to conduct an audit of gender related activity across government. This allowed us to assess existing practices and work out what more needed to be done. This was followed by the creation of a number of working groups bringing in civil society and experts from other governments to advise us, and share their knowledge and best practice.
- *[As a comment at this stage I think it very important to underline that we identified from that outset that we needed to agree a framework with the input and support of all those concerned, both government departments and civil society. Civil society is an important voice, not only through encouraging governments to take action but also through contributing expertise.]*
- Having identified work that had already taken place and work that was required, it was necessary to prioritise the activities. The UK Action Plan links development, humanitarian, defence and diplomacy work, all important to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It consists of 12 broad areas of activity and sub-action points, including several actions shared across more than one government department.
- A few examples of areas covered include - seeking the appointment of more women to senior positions both domestically and within international organisations; continuing to deploy female military and police personnel where possible; auditing all UK armed forces training and developing further awareness training; and, ensuring that gender perspectives are included in all Security Council resolutions and decisions of international organisations. This last role we take very seriously as a permanent member of the Security Council and have been grateful to the NGO community in New York for their support.

Implementation

- Our Action Plan is a living document which we will add to over time. Moreover, we are only too aware that an Action Plan does not bring about implementation on its own but is merely a tool to assist. It is hugely important to have structures to review progress. In the UK we do this in a number of ways but encourage NGOs and Parliamentarians to keep us to our side of the bargain by asking parliamentary questions, or chasing progress through regular meetings. Civil Servants meet quarterly, or sometimes more often, to review progress in the Cross-Whitehall Working Group. There is a House of Commons All-Party Group that brings together Parliamentarians, Government representatives, including Ministers, and

NGOs for quarterly meetings, and a number of other meetings are arranged ad hoc both in London and New York.

Problems encountered and lessons learnt

- Even in the early stages, developing a National Action Plan is not easy. One of the key obstacles - as is so often the case with both national and international government and institutions - was **resources**. It takes time not only to allocate resources, both human and financial, to the development of the Action Plan but also to allocate resources to the action it suggests. We were asking each of the government departments to individually commit to collective action and this is not easy.
- **Time** was also a problem. It can be a long and slow process contacting the various government departments, identifying wider expertise that can help and working out how the actual implementation of SCR 1325 can take place. Cross-governmental work is complex and requires sustained effort.
- But we were lucky. We already had some experience of interdepartmental working groups, and already had the Global Conflict Prevention Pools, that, since 2001, had united our Foreign, Defence and Development ministries in conflict prevention activities. From this coordination structure we were therefore able to identify a logical process to follow for the development of the National Action Plan.

Results

- Turning to a few examples of our recent activities, we have spent over £5 million on work relating to SCR 1325 since 2001, supporting the activities of UN DPKO, UNIFEM and civil society groups like the Urgent Action Fund and the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security.
- Under the Action Plan the UK has provided funds for the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to establish a virtual resource centre for those who are carrying out this work. We also work to deploy UK female military and police personnel in peace operations and fund a range of projects, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo, we have supported the Electoral Commission and women's organisations towards the full participation of women in the political process.
- In June 2006 the Security Council, led by the UK, made a mission to Sudan and met with women's groups, experts and representatives in Khartoum and Darfur. A few months later on August 30 2006 the Security Council issued a resolution with some of the strongest gender language – particularly on gender-based violence. This, for us, was the direct fulfilment of one of the main provisions of 1325 relating to the obligations of the Security Council.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen

- Speaking frankly, it was our assessment that the government administration was too big to see effective coordination of activities in an ad hoc fashion. Concerned that cracks would always appear in such an approach, we felt it essential to come up with a coordination structure. But such a structure can only work if all concerned - especially the development, defence and diplomatic agencies – share an understanding of what is to be achieved. Clearly some actions are department specific but it is still vital that all departments are on the same page. Unless you have this broad spectrum of support – with, I should stress, Ministerial backing – it is hard to make progress.
- Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to reiterate the UK's commitment to SCR 1325 and the full implementation of its provisions. We hope that through sharing our experiences we can ensure that full gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, conflict management, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and true implementation of this landmark resolution can become a reality.
- I should add that our National Action Plan is available on the UK Foreign and Commonwealth website – www.fco.gov.uk.