



Mission of the United States of America
February 15, 2012

U.S. Statement to the 674th Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation

Madam Chairperson:

In the spirit of continuing our interest on gender and security issues, particularly those relevant to the political-military dimension and the FSC, I have a statement to share about a recent change regarding women in the United States Armed Forces.

On February 9th, the Department of Defense submitted a report to Congress on the review of laws, policies and regulations restricting the service of female members in the U.S. armed forces.

While the services have opened additional positions to women over the years, this review provided an opportunity to reconsider all gender-restricted policies from a broad department-wide perspective with all services' senior leaders at the table.

The review and its concluding report reflect the Secretary of Defense's vision of removing barriers that prevent all service members from rising to the highest level of potential and responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant.

A 1994 policy, which remains in effect today, prohibits assigning women to direct ground combat units below the brigade level. The new report recommends changes to certain provisions, which will open over 14,000 positions to women. Opening these positions implements lessons from over a decade at war where women were proven exceptionally capable and indispensable to mission accomplishment.

This move will expand career opportunities for women, provide a greater pool of qualified members from whom our combatant commanders may draw, reduce the operational tempo by increasing the total number of personnel available for assignments, and provide commanders greater flexibility in meeting combat support mission requirements.

The Department of Defense is committed to continuing efforts to open additional positions by replacing gender-restricted policies with neutral physical

standards based on tasks our military members are required to perform in the course of their duties.

The Department of Defense intends to implement the changes notified in its report to Congress upon completion of the required congressional notification period of 30 days, which is expected to occur later this spring.

Madam Chairperson,

We intend to circulate the details of this policy after the changes go into effect. Meanwhile here are some basic statistics about women and the U.S. Armed Forces:

- 205,000 women are in the 1.4 million-member active-duty force representing 14.6% of active duty military personnel.
- The current breakdown of positions available to women by service is:
 - 99% of all Air Force positions
 - 88% for the Navy
 - 66% for the Army
 - 68% for the Marines
- President Barack Obama nominated Air Force Lt. Gen. Janet Wolfenbarger for promotion on February 6, which would make her the first female four-star general in Air Force history pending Senate approval. If approved, Gen Wolfenbarger will become commander of Air Force Materiel Command
- United States Army General Ann Dunwoody currently the first and only serving female four star in the U.S., since November 2008 is the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, which is one of the largest commands in the Army with more than 66,000 employees and impacts or has a presence in 48 states and 127 countries.
- 20,000 of the 205,000 service members currently serving in Afghanistan are women (9.8%)
- 144 military women have been killed (6336 total KIA as of today) and 865 wounded in combat and noncombat incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.