

**Buantoscaireacht na hÉireann**  
**don Eagraíocht um Shlándaíl agus Comhar san Eoraip**  
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the  
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe



**Statement by Ireland at the 1127<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation - Security Dialogue. Women in Armed Forces – Challenges & Perspectives.**

**11 February 2026**

Ireland aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union. We thank the Chair for the focus on women in the armed forces, which is highly relevant in the current context, as Russia continues its brutal unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. We commend Ukraine and its people, including Ukrainian women, for their courage, resilience and leadership.

As a longstanding champion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda Ireland strongly supports equal participation of women and men at all levels in Defence Force operations and the inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of operational planning.

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the armed forces and in the wider security sector is key to implementation and maintenance of peace and security throughout our region. A strategic imperative, as our UK colleague called it, mainstreaming gender across military, humanitarian, and diplomatic planning is proven to lead to improved operational outcomes during and following conflict.

It is increasingly evident that there is an inextricable link between the involvement of women in peace and security efforts and prospects for peaceful resolution of conflicts. We know that higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower risk of inter and intra state conflict.

But we also need to acknowledge that, however, that a lot of work remains to be done, especially when it comes to our armed forces. Women currently make up



less than 7% of Ireland's Defence Forces and are especially underrepresented at senior level. A recent survey identified impediments to the advancement of women in the Defence Forces and included issues surrounding: maternity leave and childcare, challenges with career development or with overseas service. But culture also plays a key role. A career in the military must be seen as viable to women, and one which guarantees a supportive and inclusive working environment to all. As a speaker said earlier, diversity is an operational necessity, not an afterthought.

Ireland's Defence Force's Fourth Action Plan for the Implementation of WPS, includes measures to improve the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women within the military while also developing better approaches and deepening organisational capacity in this regard. A key objective of the plan is to foster a Defence Forces' environment that actively supports the meaningful participation of women at every level; from the strategic decision-making to tactical operations.

The further development of regulatory frameworks on inclusion, work-life balance and flexible working arrangements reflect the priority given to this important topic. Initiatives such as the online interactive Gender and Unconscious bias training and the development of the Defence Forces Women's Network increases the visibility of women's contributions across the Defence Forces.

We are aware that without the active and positive input of both women and men in our armed forces, we simply cannot maximise operational capability. At a time when our security and stability is under even greater challenge it is more important than ever that we implement the conditions to enable women to participate fully and on an equal footing.

Thank you.