



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

**STATEMENT IN THE FSC SECURITY DIALOGUE: WOMEN IN THE ARMED
FORCES**

As delivered by Military Adviser Colonel Bjørn Gaute Herlyng at the 1127th
Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation,

Vienna, 11th February 2026

Madame Chair,

At the outset, allow me to thank you for bringing this important topic to the forefront through today's Security Dialogue. I would also like to thank the three panellists for sharing their insights and perspectives.

On this occasion, we would like to share some Norwegian experiences that may inspire and encourage others. Similarly, we appreciate hearing the perspectives of others in this Forum.

First, I would like to express our profound respect to the many courageous Ukrainian women who continue to fight against the ongoing Russian war of aggression. Ukrainian women have played key roles on the frontlines, as first-responders, as human rights defenders, as peace builders, and much more. Norway remains committed to supporting their ongoing efforts to defend their country. To this end, we have earmarked contributions under the Nansen programme to provide personal equipment suited to women, supporting better overall operability and performance in the Ukrainian Armed Forces. This is based on our own experiences, that fitting personal equipment is very important for the well-being, security and effectiveness of all soldiers, women as well as men.

Madame Chair,

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Last year, Norway marked ten years with universal conscription. This was a natural continuation of our policy to ensure equal rights and responsibilities regardless of gender. Women serve in the armed forces not to symbolise gender equality, but because their participation strengthens the overall quality and performance of our forces. Norway affirms that women are willing, able, and entitled to a full, equal and meaningful participation in all areas of the security sector.

Recruitment and selection in our Armed forces are purely based on suitability and professional competence. As the war in Ukraine has taught us, modern warfare requires more comprehensive responses to both the varieties of threats and the challenges to society faced during war. For the total defence of our countries, it is therefore crucial to make use of all talents available, regardless of gender, and to adapt the Armed forces to be able to use these talents – as in with the example of personal equipment.

Madame Chair,

Another example of this adaptation is the Hunter Troop. Established in 2014, the Hunter Troop is a special operations unit under the Norwegian Special Operations Command made up exclusively of women. The aim was to learn about and foster women's comparative advantages as soldiers in the special operations and in general. Initially, the soldiers following the unit's traditional training regime experienced unproportionately many physical injuries during their training. As a response, an adapted training plan was developed which brought the soldiers injury-free to a performance level comparable to that of their male counterparts.

Today, one in three conscripts doing initial service are women, and one in five of those actively serving in the Norwegian Defence are women. In 2022, 85 percent of female conscripts reported that their initial service had been a positive experience. This is higher than for their male counterparts.

While it is useful to share progress, it is also important to reflect on how far we still have to go. Gender discrimination and sexual harassment is still present in our Armed Forces. As one important means to counter this and similar issues, we have strengthened our whistleblowing and compliance systems, both organisation, manning and processes, to ensure that those impacted can report outside of command line and that the cases reported are handled promptly, correctly and fair. Similarly, we have reinforced our work on an inclusive work culture.

As the Norwegian Chief of Defence, Eirik Kristoffersen said: "When women and men serve side by side, we get a military that reflects the society we are meant to defend." A

defence that draws on the full breadth of talent in the population is not only fairer; it is stronger, more adaptable and better equipped to meet today's security challenges. Thus, we stress the importance of advancing all aspects of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including the inclusion of women in the Armed Forces – to improve the effectiveness of the Armed Forces and thus our security.

We are happy to share further details about our experiences should it be of interest to other participating states.

Madame Chair,

Thank you.