



Linking Women, Peace & Security and the Arms Control Agendas

12 March 2015

The Australian Mission to the UN in coordination with International Action Network on Small Arms Women's Network (WNA), Global Alliance on Armed Violence (GAAV), and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) held a side event at the Australian Mission in New York on 12 March 2015. This side event took place during the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to discuss and highlight the links between Women, Peace and Security and the arms control agendas. The side event consisted of a panel discussion and a question & answer session. The guest speakers on the panel included Daniel Prins from the Conventional Arms Branch of the UNODA, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja AM, Jasmin Nario-Galace from IANSA Women's Network and Ray Acheson from Reaching Critical Will, WILPF. The event was moderated by Cora Weiss, UN Representative and former Director of the International Peace Bureau.

Natasha Stott Despoja began the discussion by emphasizing the crucial need for passion, commitment and energy to be maintained, in addition to renewed international cooperation, when dealing with women, peace and security issues. Ms. Despoja noted the significance of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in being the first instrument to link women and the international arms trade. Acts of violence are most often facilitated by the unregulated transfer of arms and it is therefore important that there is full and proper implementation of the ATT. According to Ms. Despoja, the Australian government is fully committed to the complete implementation of the ATT and has taken measures to ensure implementation is carried out at a national level. Further, the Australian government is assisting other countries with ensuring proper implementation of the Treaty. The vital need for more women to participate in decision making processes at all levels was also highlighted.

Daniel Prins, Director of the Conventional Arms Branch of the UNODA, concentrated his discussion on young men and armed violence. Men, and in particular young men between the ages of 12-30, are both the main victims and main perpetrators of armed violence. Small arms play a central role in this violence and they are very often seen as effective tools for power by men. There are regular cases in every region of the world where it is seen as attractive to use weapons in order to obtain wealth, respect, and security, in addition to giving men a sense of empowerment within

their community. As noted by Mr. Prins, there are programs that can work in reducing armed violence and the role of men in such violence. There are two main types of programs in which this can be done. The first is aimed at arms reduction and has a short term focus, while the second has a long term focus and aims to get arms away from young men. One developing program described by Mr. Prins during his presentation involved police in a community doing a search of homes with parents' consent. Any illegal weapons found during these searches would be confiscated with no persecution. As suggested, other programs can deal with changing the attitudes of communities, and young men in particular, in relation to weapons. These programs are more difficult to do but can lead to social change.

Jasmin Nario-Galace from IANSA Women's Network spoke specifically on the Philippines National Action Plan (NAP) and its effects on the inclusion of women in arms control agendas. The Philippines National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security is one of the very few NAPs that has language on controlling the tools of violence. The language in the NAP is used to call on peace negotiators to integrate the language of arms control in peace agreements and to lobby for the inclusion of language on women's participation in arms control, community policing and security in the Bangsamoro Basic Law. Further, arms control language in the NAP is used as an entry point to sharing capacities with women on the ground on arms control, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution.

As mentioned by Ms. Nario-Galace, although the Philippines has this language included, its people are yet to know the impact of this. She raised interesting questions regarding this: Has the number of women victimized by gun violence been reduced since our NAP was adopted? Are there more women participating in arms control mechanisms? What has been the impact of their participation? The problem is not only the lack of awareness on the part of some duty bearers and non-state actors. Some of those who are aware of it lack appreciation for the link established and there have even been efforts to remove the language from the NAP. Ms. Nario-Galace analyzed the lessons learned from the NAP when working for further inclusion of women in arms control and disarmament agendas. First, there is a need to engage the men, especially gun holders. Second, there have been varying interpretation of peace and security and women's roles. Global consultations on UNSCR 1325 that are currently being carried out should consider including the definition of peace and security which will hopefully be consistent with feminist perspectives of peace and security. Third, it is important to address the biases against women to effectively campaign for women's meaningful participation. Fourth, there is a need to have champions in every government sector- in the security sector, in the ministries, in the religious sector- as they can effectively help in taking the gender and disarmament cause forward. Fifth, there is a need to continue to reach out to women on the ground. Investing in their empowerment to prevent and resolve conflicts can make a difference in communities where the day-to-day violence occurs. Sixth, there must be a continuation to work with government ministries leading to implementation of the NAP to reach out to as many duty bearers as possible.

Lastly, gender-based violence and the different types of violence that men and women are exposed to because of their sex was the focus of Ray Acheson's presentation. Focusing on nuclear weapons, she explains how we can see the different effects men and women face. An example, used was the

aftermath of a nuclear testing carried out on the Marshall Islands. Men and women on the Marshall Islands are costumed to eat different parts of the fish. It was found that women were more affected by the radiation resulted from the nuclear testing because of the part of the fish they ate. Further, the use of explosive weapons in populated regions, such as in Iraq, Gaza Strip, and Ukraine, cause civilian deaths and the destruction of infrastructure. The effects of this are different for men and women- women can lose their access to healthcare, they may become the head of the household and be subject to scrutiny from society, or they can become displaced and can become subject to more violence. Ms. Acheson expressed the importance that men also face gender based violence. For example, in certain countries where armed drone strikes take place, males of a certain age may be classed as militants even if they are not. Sex and age may be used to identify if they are legitimate targets and drone strikes are more likely to go ahead when men are the targets. In addition, society is lead to the belief that men are expendable and women are weak. Societies still expect men to be violent and expect women to need protection. There is always a need to protect the ‘innocent civilians’ in times of war or conflict. However, Ms. Acheson poses the question: Who are the innocent civilians? Women, children and the elderly are grouped into the category of innocent civilian and this can reinforce the violent role men play.



In all, it was reinforced that there are clear issues that need to be addressed in order to strengthen the links between women, peace & security and arms control & disarmament. National Actions Plans, like that in the Philippines, need to be adopted and implemented accordingly. Similarly the proper and full implementation of the new ATT which contains provisions relating to gender is vital. Gender based violence also needs to be addressed, and it is important that society understand

that both men and women can be victims of armed violence. Education is key for this. It is necessary for society to learn of the crucial links between women, peace & security and arms control and disarmament.