



Statement by H. E. Ambassador Vinicio Mati
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 19 May 2016

Madam President,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the important issue of women and disarmament. It is an issue to which our government attaches great importance, particularly as relates to conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery. Let me also thank Secretary-General Michael Møller for his statement and efforts to promote gender balance, and the panellists for their interventions.

With resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” the UN Security Council, for the first time, addressed not only the disproportionate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role that they can and should play in conflict management, resolution, and in the achievement of sustainable peace.

Italy has supported this resolution from the start; it is also one of the 40 some countries in the world that have elaborated National Action Plans for its implementation.

Our second National Action Plan, for the 2014-2016 triennium, aims to promote the role of women in the National Armed Forces, State Police, and Peace-Support Operations, as well as in decision-making. In particular, Italy’s National Action Plan envisages activities regarding the issue of “Women, Peace, and Security” in specific conflict-affected geographical areas.

We are also aware that security and development are intimately connected, and firmly support all initiatives that take this connection into account. In line with this approach Italy, together with several other Countries and UNWomen, hosted a High-Level Event on “Women, Peace and Security in the Post-2015 Development Agenda” during the last session of the UN General Assembly.

In 2015 Italy also funded a training project on raising awareness among Libyan women of the risks associated with small arms and ammunition. Organized by UNMAS, the workshop aimed not only at providing women with very concrete training on how to safely store and handle firearms, but also at making them aware of their influence on household and community behaviour, and as agents of cultural change, without which

long-term strategies to reduce the proliferation of small arms in Libyan society will be ineffective.

Madame President,

Allow me to underline that, in Italy's view, the relationship between women and disarmament is part of the broader question of gender and disarmament and to the importance of including gender-based approaches in disarmament discussions and processes.

The relationship between gender and disarmament is indeed complex, and must be addressed in at least two respects. On the one hand, we know from extensive research that conflicts have different impacts on different segments of the population. Men typically constitute the primary victims of direct armed violence; women and children, on the other hand, usually make up the majority of so-called "collateral damage", of refugees, and internally-displaced people. Together with the elderly and persons with disabilities, women and children suffer more greatly from the indirect impacts of conflict, for instance, in terms of denied access to key infrastructures and services.

Adding a gender dimension to the disarmament debate means to identify these specific needs and formulate adequate responses to address them. This applies, for instance, in relation to disarmament and, more importantly, reintegration programmes, which most often target ex-combatants (the majority of whom are men fit for combat) and exclude their supporting networks (largely composed of women and youth).

A second, fundamental dimension of the gender debate specifically underlines the need for equal access and full participation of women in decision-making processes and in efforts aimed at both preventing and resolving conflicts. Women and girls play a crucial role in reconstruction: they represent the cornerstone of families and communities; they offer different perspectives on political, economic and social life; and they are critical actors in reconciliation.

Lastly, let me underline the value we attach to partnerships in this field, specifically to the involvement of civil society. This has been instrumental in drawing attention to the relationship between gender and security and is a key actor in the elaboration and implementation of operational programmes.

Thank you, Madam President