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Committee on Foreign Affairs

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OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

on the situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in reconstruction
and the democratic process in countries after a conflict
(2005/2215(INI))

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Reiterates the previous calls for effective parliamentary scrutiny of the ESDP in order to ensure transparent observation of the situation of women in volatile areas where the deployment of EU forces is planned or ongoing;
2. Emphasises the importance of the implementation and further development of generic standards of behaviour for ESDP operations, due attention being paid to the consistency of those rules with the rules governing other types of EU presence in third countries, as well as the Guidelines on protection of civilians in EU-led crisis management operations and the training activities planned as part of the EU Training Concept within the ESDP; calls on the Council to ensure that all EU crisis management staff receive compulsory training regarding the protection of children and their rights, in particular with regard to girls; stresses the critical need to incorporate gender-specific training in all training programmes for staff to be deployed under ESDP missions;
3. Asks the Commission to report to Parliament on the implementation of the 2003 Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict;
4. Underlines the need to include this issue in the European Security Strategy, as well as in the military and civilian crisis-management headline goals and in the programmes for conflict prevention; requests the Council to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in all ESDP training activities under the responsibility of the European Defence and Security College;
5. Encourages the EU to pay more attention to the presence, preparation, training and equipment of police forces within its military missions, since police units represent the principal means of guaranteeing the security of the civilian population, particularly women and children; is of the opinion that the mandate of military personnel in EU military missions is not such as to afford sufficient protection, security guarantees and services specific to women and children during conflict resolution and in post-conflict stages; proposes that both military and police personnel form EU military missions in ESDP operations;
6. Stresses the importance of the role that a female presence can play in peacekeeping missions in defusing violence towards women in conflict and post-conflict zones, and calls on the EU to support measures aimed at increasing significantly the number of women at all levels in all ESDP missions;
7. Calls on EU Member States to do their utmost to recruit women as military, police and political officers as well as diplomats; requests EU Member States to stimulate the candidature of women and to submit their names as candidates for positions as military, police and political officers in ESDP missions at the earliest stage of the planning of such missions;

8. Strongly welcomes the Council's 'operational paper' as adopted in November 2005 on the 'Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the context of ESDP', focusing on practical measures to mainstream the issue of gender in the ESDP policy process and the inclusion of women systematically and at all levels in all the EU's military and non-military missions;
9. Stresses the need to involve women in negotiations aimed at ending armed conflicts and urges the Council and the Commission to encourage the warring parties on every occasion to take due account of this and for the principles of 'transitional justice' to be applied during peace processes and transition to democracy and the rule of law, respecting the rights of victims, providing for equal representation of women on committees of inquiry set up for the purposes of reconciliation and gender mainstreaming with regard to the measures adopted by these committees;
10. strongly supports the call made by a powerful coalition of Kosovar women's organisations on 8 March 2006 for the inclusion of women in the international seven-man Kosovar team negotiating the future status of the region; regrets that so far this call has been ignored;
11. Is convinced that ESDP mission planning should include the participation of local women's organisations in the peace process, in order to build on the specific contribution which they can make and to recognise the particular ways in which women are affected by conflict;
12. Highlights the positive role that women play in conflict resolution and requests the Commission and the Member States to ensure adequate technical and financial assistance in support of programmes enabling women to participate to the full in the conduct of peace negotiations and empowering women in civil society as a whole;
13. Stresses the positive role that women can play in post-conflict reconstruction and in particular in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, in particular when such programmes are targeted at child soldiers; calls on Member States to ensure full participation by women in DDR programmes and, in particular, to seek to tailor DDR programmes so as to reintegrate child soldiers;
14. Calls for perpetrators of war crimes against civilian populations, and against children in particular, to be brought to justice; urges Member States to support the role of the ICC in that regard;
15. Points out that the International Criminal Court clearly defines what constitutes crimes against humanity and calls for the introduction of procedures to report acts of sexual violence and mass rape as weapons of war, so as to ensure that such acts do not go unpunished; stresses the need to guarantee immediate access for all women and girls who have been victims of rape to post-coital contraception and considers that measures to ensure full respect for sexual and reproductive rights will help to minimise acts of sexual violence committed in conflict situations;
16. Stresses that the large number of women and children among refugees and internally displaced persons being registered by international bodies as a result of armed conflict and civil war is a cause for great concern;

17. Stresses the special needs of women and girls with respect to mine clearance and rehabilitation and the reintegration of victims of armed conflicts; requests the European Community to earmark sufficient funding to include a gender perspective in these programmes under the Stability Instrument for the forthcoming programming period (2007-2013);
18. Underlines that, although 'anti-people mines' may have been used in military situations, it was mostly women, children and ordinary men who were killed or maimed by them, and whose capacity to earn their livelihoods was removed; reiterates that the EU must aim to promote adherence to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, principally in Africa, but partly in Europe and elsewhere; urges the EU to intensify efforts to clear post-conflict areas of mines, and to ensure treatment and rehabilitation of victims and reclamation of mined land so that people can live and work there in safety again;
19. Supports the due implementation of human rights clauses in agreements with third countries and of the principles of international humanitarian law and related international agreements, with specific reference to women's rights and needs;
20. Believes that making the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports legally binding will make a major contribution to reducing the suffering of women, by reducing the number of armed conflicts around the globe.