



Opening Ceremony, Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations

January 24, 2012

Your Excellences, Guest of honours, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with distinct honor and pleasure; I welcome you all to this opening ceremony.

For a long time, developments around the world have shown the need of gender perspectives in peace support operations. We have a long term responsibility to recognize women as important actors in the struggle for security, development and good governance of their society. Participation assures support and security for women we have encouraged to take a greater responsibility in their society.

Gender perspectives will support and strengthen the human rights and overall security situation for the whole populations; men, women, girls and boys. If we are missing information from more than 50 percent of the local population in the area of peace support operation, it means that the operation will most likely not be successful. It is absolute fundamental that secure environment consist of both women and men.

To have a gender perspective is to be able to detect if and when men and women are being affected differently by an operation due to their gender. Our experiences from previous operations show that if we are able to implement a gender perspective in our operations, we will have an improved chance to succeed. Therefore, as the host nation, I am very proud to formally open the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations today.

Traditionally, the importance of gender perspectives in operations has been underestimated and we are experiencing a great need of collaboration. Through the establishment of a Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, we take one small but important step, making sure that we integrate gender perspectives into the planning, execution and evaluation of any military operation. In many areas of our international operations, women have as they should, a central function to keep the society working.

Gender often dictates what roles, rights and responsibilities people have in their society. If one group of society for instance is hindered in finding employment outside the home, it will be harder for that group to earn an income and support themselves and their family. Likewise, a group that has little or no representation at the political level will not have their voices or concerns heard, and structural injustices might prevail.

Gender Advisors, Gender Field Advisors and Gender Focal Points are appointed in different levels to make sure this important work are gaining approval through our whole organisation. All staff who is participating in UN and NATO international missions, military as well as civil, is going through a basic education to gain knowledge about the UN resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security related resolutions. They will also go through education on the Swedish Armed Forces ethical guidelines and code of conduct.

I am convinced that the new Centre will even further strengthen the Nordic Countries capability to contribute to international crisis management operations, where we act together with other organizations and nations. During the last years, the Nordic countries have increased efforts in the implementation of UN resolution 1325 as well as related resolutions.

To ensure effective implementation and capacity building, training and education is crucial and now possible through our new Centre. The content will be mainly derived from lessons identified from missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, DRC, Chad, Somalia and Uganda.

The Swedish Armed Forces implemented a Gender Coach Program in 2004 which covered a broad spectrum from the field to the strategic level. I participated myself and was educated how to integrate a gender perspective in military operations. Those learning experiences have been invaluable in my continuous achievements for the Swedish Armed Forces. The Gender Coach Program will continue and through the new Centre it can be introduced to other organizations and nations.

The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations will act as a hub of information, knowledge and experiences. The Centre will continuously support and cooperate with UN, NATO, EU, OSCE and other relevant actors regarding gender perspective issues.

The key tasks of the Centre will be;

- to conduct recognized courses,
- to collect lessons learned,
- to cooperation and liaison,
- to coordinate seminars,
- as well as support to other partners and actors.

I would like to end my speech by express my appreciation for the difficult work that our soldiers and Gender Advisors are carrying out in our operations around the world, often in very difficult circumstances.

Without any doubts, the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations will strengthen the Nordic operational capacity and help us become even more effective in our future operations. I am convinced that we will see the results of our joint efforts in implementation of gender perspectives in our current and future mission areas. It is absolute fundamental that secure environment consist of both women and men, as I stated in the beginning.

With these words, I would now like to announce the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations officially open.

Commander Jan Dunmurray, Head of Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, please step forward.

Thank you.