

Keynote Address

INTRODUCTION OF DDA'S GENDER ACTION PLAN

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Panel Discussion

"Making Disarmament More Effective: Men and Women Working Together"

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I welcome all of you to this most auspicious event - Your Excellency, Ambassador Maiolini, Chairman of the UN Disarmament Commission, Assistant Secretary-General, Angela King, Special Adviser of the S.G on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, distinguished panellists, colleagues and friends from the diplomatic and NGO communities. The appearance here today of Ambassador Maiolini is a fitting tribute to the importance of the issue we are addressing today -- he has found time to be with us even as the Disarmament Commission enters the most challenging phase of its work, the final week of its 2003 session.

I want to thank the Special Adviser, the Division for the Advancement of Women, and the Office of Human Resources Management, as well as the consultants Ms. Beth Woroniuk and Dr. Meraav Datan, all of whom combined forces with DDA to produce the department's Gender Action Plan, which I have the pleasure of introducing today. As part of the competency development programme for DDA, OHRM bore the cost of producing the Action Plan in order to promote an active and visible policy on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the department.

Gender mainstreaming is defined by ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 as "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

I believe that the Department of Disarmament Affairs has taken a giant step towards addressing the ideals of the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, I referred to this event as "auspicious" not only because it is, I daresay, a unique example of the merits of inter-departmental cooperation, but also because this Gender Action Plan is the first of its kind to be developed by a department of the United Nations. Some would say - patronizingly --- that it is easier with a small department. I disagree. The challenge of changing attitude at all levels in human resource management is the same whatever the size of the Department. Where there is a will there is a way. The Action Plan will provide standards and lessons learnt during its implementation will benefit other UN departments and agencies as well. The Plan is the articulation of a practical approach to the theoretical concept of mainstreaming gender in the substantive tasks of the Department of Disarmament Affairs.

To us, it is the culmination of the department's gender mainstreaming process, which began in earnest 4 or 5 years ago, when the Special Adviser and her colleagues visited the department and began to introduce the notion that Gender had a place, a rightful place, in a programme which dealt with topics such as weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, landmines and disarmament and development. The close collaboration continued with the production in 2001 of a set of Briefing Notes entitled "*Gender Perspectives on Disarmament*".

This publication was the first of its kind to address the linkages between these two subjects and to present a different angle on the traditionally complex and politically sensitive fields of security, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Briefing Notes have been distributed world-wide, in both "Gender" and "Disarmament" fora, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as in the UN Disarmament Commission, and, most recently, was brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Special Adviser. We have received

excellent feedback and hope to continue to update the Notes.

Emboldened by the success of the Briefing Notes, and this first attempt, as it were, at making these important connections, the department called on its allies, OSAGI, DAW, OHRM and UNIFEM to assist it in moving to the next level -- translating into practice the clear mandates on the need to incorporate gender perspectives into disarmament activities, contained in the Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

Our partners quickly heeded our call and thus the Gender Action Plan for the Department of Disarmament Affairs was developed through an extensive consultative process with the staff of the department. It is intended to strengthen, consolidate, inform and guide the department's work on disarmament into the future. The emphasis, we hope, will be on the word "Action". We also hope that our "other" partners, the Member States and Non-Governmental Organizations, will similarly recognize the need to join DDA in implementing this Plan.

The overall goal for the Action Plan is to facilitate progress on disarmament. A primary assumption behind the action plan is that disarmament - both generally and in specific initiatives - can be strengthened through the integration of gender insights in disarmament debates, decision-making and actions, and through more equitable participation by women in decision-making.

This Plan identifies practical steps to be taken relating to both the substantive areas of work, such as small arms and weapons of mass destruction, and to common methods of work, such as public outreach and organizing conferences and workshops. It sets out the next phase in DDA's ongoing effort to explore the overlap, relevance and potential synergy between attempts to promote disarmament and efforts to promote gender equality. It focuses on how and why gender perspectives are relevant in the mandate and activities of the Department and identifies steps that can be taken within the current work structure to better incorporate gender issues.

The internal document that has been distributed to all Staff in DDA was shaped as a working tool to assist the Staff in incorporating a gender perspective in each of their daily activities. Efforts were made to elaborate a user-friendly tool that contains checklists for everyday use and, at the same time, in annexes, some substantive material to support the further reflection on why a gender perspective will make our disarmament world more effective.

We have distributed to you a public version of this document. We hope to continue the collaborative process, with all of you as partners. Eventually, after implementing it for one year, we will re-evaluate the Plan, with a view to enriching it with the experiences gained and lessons learnt during its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot but reiterate my conviction already expressed in the

Introduction of the Action Plan: "When women move forward, and when disarmament moves forward, the world moves forward." Let us continue this journey together.

Thank you.