

Speech by: P. van Wulfften Palthe, Ambassador of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Madrid, 11 June 2012

A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Operations

Sub-Secretary of Defence of the Kingdom of Spain, Ms Irene Domínguez-Alcahud, Lieutenant-General Alfonso de la Rosa Morena, Director of the CESEDEN, military and civilian authorities, participants, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning.

A peacekeeping mission is not a football team.

Far from it. But, in these times of Euro cup fever, it most certainly is a suitable metaphor. Let me explain myself:

A strong football team needs players with different talents to play in different positions. A team 11 “Casillas” would never let a ball pass. But, the team would never score! On the other hand, a team of 11 Lionel Messis would probably break world records scoring. But in this scenario the opposing team would probably score just as much – or even more –because there would be no one to defend the goal.

In the end, the best football teams consist of players with different talents, with different perspectives on the game, and who complement each other by all having different positions. This makes a winning team.

And this brings me to the scope of the course you will be attending this week: “*A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Operations*”. Comprehensiveness is all about building on varying views and perspectives, from military, civilian, police and civil society actors. Joint missions require both civilian and military approaches, and need to make use of diverse operational and communication tools and diverse potential. A mere three weeks ago, heads of state of NATO allies reconfirmed the importance of the comprehensive approach in the Afghan context. Over and beyond a military approach, continued improvements in governance, development and the political process involving successful reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan was underscored.

Equally, a comprehensive approach in missions and operations, requires for both male and female views on complex situations, from different positions in society. These perspectives complement each other and together make for a more complete analysis of the conflict, and make for a more effective response. And again, this approach was underscored in the Declaration of the NATO Chicago Summit as well.

It sounds so simple. NATO stands for it, the European Union goes for it, the United Nations works for it. Indeed, it is simple. Or, rather said, it should be simple. If only we'd weigh contributions and views different from our own and equally with an open mind. And precisely that, ladies and gentlemen, is not a given. In fact, it is one of the challenges of the comprehensive approach, and it is the major challenge for incorporating gender from the earliest planning phase onwards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conflicts - lingering or violent ones –those characteristics that define the 'otherness', those characteristics that separate

‘us from them’, are what motivate people to prolong or even intensify the conflict. This is why the most effective peace negotiations are those that find common ground and common interests. These common interests can be identified best if they are based on a comprehensive analysis of all interests involved, of all needs, of men and women, of people in power, and of people in poverty.

Dear participants, if we truly want to advance our collective security through missions and operations, we have the responsibility to engage everyone – within our missions, and most certainly in the partner countries – in their own strengths, and with our differences.

Yet, active and inclusive engagement of women remains below the mark. Still less than 10% of peace negotiators are women, less than 3% are signatories to peace agreements. Moreover, in the past 20 years the proportion of deployed female uniformed personnel has only increased from 1% to a meager 4%.

These numbers need to increase. Nonetheless, this is not merely a matter of numbers; inclusive engagement of both

men and women is a precondition for enduring transitions towards sustainable peaceful, secure and stable societies. This is why the Netherlands is committed to promote full and equal participation of women and men in all spheres of our peace and security efforts. In Afghanistan, the training of female police personnel is an integral part of the Dutch contribution to the police training mission in the province Kunduz. As a result of this, in December 2011, 17 Afghan police women obtained a diploma from the Police Commissioner in Kabul. Furthermore, the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Education, in collaboration with 32 civil society organizations and four academic institutions adopted the second Dutch National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in December last year. Our collective objective is to combat conflict-related gender violence and to achieve equal participation of women and men in peace and reconstruction processes in countries such as Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Middle East and North Africa. One specific area of action defined in the Action Plan

is creating gender capacity of military, diplomatic and other civilian personnel. Indeed, this course is a regular part of our National Action Plan. And, I am pleased to state it is not only a regular part of the Dutch Action Plan; as a result of the Spanish-Dutch cooperation, gender has become embedded in the curriculum of the European Security and Defense Collegesince March this year. By offering this course, Spain and the Netherlands take a joint leadership role in giving response to the recent call by the Council of the European Union to include a gender perspective in training under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Our cooperation is a matter of smart security, as we pool and share military and civilian capabilities in the field of gender and human rights from within our respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. We certainly found our common ground.

And I, for my part, hope you will find sufficient ground to prepare you for deployment, for an assignment in a fragile state, or just to pass on your new perspectives in your current

work. I wish you a successful and certainly also a pleasant course.

THANK YOU