

UK supports integration of women in the armed forces and OSCE Code of Conduct

Mr Chairperson, the UK strongly supports the [Code of Conduct](#) and considers it a key component of the OSCE's politico-military acquis. We welcome the discussion today on the integration of women in the armed forces – which is an important aspect of the wider Women, Peace and Security agenda. I would like to thank the presentations by the five esteemed speakers on their various experiences of this issue, including the practical examples of including women in the Armed Forces.

Mr Chair, the UK's position on the Code of Conduct remains the same. We continue to support the Code and its fundamental principles. As a reminder, all participating States agreed to the full, faithful and effective implementation of the Code of Conduct. Such implementation of commitments under the Code of Conduct would be transformative in the Euro-Atlantic area today – including in the case of Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea.

Mr Chair, I will now focus on the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The UK remains committed to the full implementation of [UNSCR 1325](#) and the subsequent resolutions related to WPS. This includes through the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the UK's Armed Forces. Over 20 years ago, UNSCR 1325 acknowledged the critical importance of women in peace and security efforts, including in conflict prevention and resolution, in the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace. It also highlighted the need to prevent against and protect women and girls from gender-based violence, including in armed conflict and in post-conflict settings. [At the Tirana Ministerial Council fifty-two participating States made clear their desire to see concrete action at the OSCE](#), and the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) in particular, to further the full implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In that context, I welcome the Swedish Chair-in-Office's hosting of a Code of Conduct event in Stockholm last month focused on actions which can be taken to safeguard the full and equal participation of women in the Armed Forces. The event explored different perspectives, challenges and solutions and how possible obstacles could be avoided or overcome, in order for women to serve on equal terms.

Another important element is the voluntary information-sharing on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the framework of the replies to the annual Questionnaire on the Code of Conduct on Politico Military Aspects of Security. The UK sees its return as an important way of sharing national efforts and best practices in implementation of the WPS agenda. It is particularly encouraging to see that the number of participating States reporting on implementation of UNSCR 1325 is increasing over time – from 33

last year to 40 in 2021. To help facilitate returns from all participating States, I am delighted that the UK and Belgium are hosting a side event today to explore how we can make the voluntary returns process easier, as well as more meaningful, to help States identify shared challenges and best practice. I hope that your delegations and capitals will participate in the discussion to help make this process better and more helpful for us all.

Mr Chair, the OSCE Code of Conduct remains a key document because it clearly establishes the fundamental principles of State behaviour required to ensure security and stability in the OSCE area. We should live up to the commitments we all undertook, and rediscover the constructive and collaborative spirit that made agreement of the Code of Conduct possible over a quarter of a century ago. We particularly value the Austrian FSC Chair's commitment to 'mainstream' Women, Peace and Security in the work of the FSC this trimester. This remains an issue with overwhelming support amongst participating States and hope we can build on that with further practical cooperation.