



Conference on Disarmament

Statement on the occasion of International Women's Day by H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Permanent Representative of Belgium

Geneva, 10 March 2022

Madam President,

I would like to thank you for your leadership as president of this Conference, and for organizing this important thematic debate, which, in our consideration, deserves the full attention of the Conference on Disarmament and belongs fully on its agenda.

Belgium aligns itself to the statement made by the EU, as well as the statement made by Peru.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, but indeed, it continues to face important challenges. Ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of all women and girls should be a priority, across the board.

UNSC resolution 1325, as well as the GA resolution on women, disarmament, arms-control and nonproliferation, underline the key role that women play in UN peace and security efforts, and call for women's full involvement. They remind us that inclusivity should be reinforced. Indeed, a stark disparity remains in the level and volume of participation of women in disarmament and arms control discussions; while it is known that, for instance, the inclusion of women in peace processes historically creates greater odds for success.

Second, the challenges for women in this field are multiple. The differential and disproportionate impact from weapons on women, the inequalities in access to survivor assistance, as well as the higher risk of sexual and gender based violence, to name just a few. This should remain *central* in our considerations. As mentioned before: gender dimensions should be incorporated in our work and should remain central in our consideration.

Madam President,

In his Agenda for Disarmament, Secretary-General Guterres outlined how ensuring gender parity in disarmament was both "a moral duty and an operational necessity". While it is important to recognize that progress has been made the last decades; Belgium calls for the continued *focus*. Also in this regard, it is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament is lagging behind in its recognition of the important role women play. The technical adaptation of the

rules of Procedure, as proposed in 2021, would be a small yet significant/meaningful change.

Some people say, Madam President, that women should not be impatient, and change will happen. However, this is 2022. The time for action, and for real equality between men and women, both *de facto* and *de iure*, should be now.

Madam President, I could not take the floor today, without drawing the particular attention of women who are affected by war. I think particularly of the Ukrainian women. While Russia is causing death, destruction, displacement and despair, civilians are paying the highest price. Attacks on healthcare facilities are a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Violators will be held accountable.

I thank you.