

**Launch of the “Handbook on Mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender into
European Security and Defence Policy”.**

27 June 2008

On the 27th of June 2008 the Slovene Presidency and ISIS Europe launched *Handbook on Mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender into European Security and Defence Policy*, a compilation of EU documents on gender and children’s rights in the context of the EU Security and Defence Policy.

Mr. Mirko Cigler, the Slovene chair of the EU Politico-Military Group, explained that the three presidencies, (Slovenia, Portugal and Germany) were concerned about the impact conflict had on women and children. Even though the EU has mechanisms in place to help mitigate the impact such as the EU Toolkit, the information sharing at the Brussels level and the collaboration with specialised NGOs, the implementation of gender mainstreaming and children’s rights in the European Security and Defence (ESD) missions is still a challenge. This Handbook is meant to increase awareness for the problem and offers handles to tackle it at EU level as it offers an overview of the different EU guidelines on enhancing human rights and gender in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Mr. Cigler also announced that there will be a digital version in the near future and that the Handbook will be published in all the EU languages.

Ms Nicole Reckinger, representing the Human Rights Unit in the Council General secretariat, stressed that the EU’s focus in (post) conflict situations is on the promotion of human rights, and gender mainstreaming is definitely part of that focus. The EU is therefore also a strong supporter of UNSCR 1325. That is why, as of 2005, it has appointed specific gender focal points to make sure that the EU ESD missions implement gender mainstreaming. As a result these missions have started to engage more with women organisations in the field.

Commending the past three presidencies for the work they have done on these issues, Ms Reckinger expressed her hope that the next three presidencies would continue the good work.

Ms Osnat Lubrani, Director of UNIFEM’s office in Brussels pointed out that the Handbook was an answer to people’s complaints that they could not find information on the EU vision on gender mainstreaming and she hoped that the ESD missions would be empowered to implement it.

Ms Sylvie Fouet, representative of UNICEF, welcomed the handbook and suggested to summarise it in a Power Point Presentation to make the content more easily accessible.

“However”, she continued, “this should not be the end. Sexual violence, especially against girls, is still rampant. That is why UNSCR 1612 on Children in Armed Conflict, needs to be expanded to include sexual violence”. She also pointed out that UNSCR 1325 is being poorly implemented as women are still not included in the build-up of post-conflict society. She announced that NGOs are drafting a shadow report on how 1325 is being implemented in Europe.

Mr. Peter Grk, Slovene representative in the EU CIVCOM Council Working Group, stressed the need for the EU to be accountable not only to the local people in the partner countries, but also to its own taxpayers and the NGOs, so monitoring the EU activities is important. He also wondered why so few women (only 7%) took part in the ESD missions.

Ms Reckinger pointed out that this was an issue to be taken up with the Member States as they are contributing the personnel for these missions.

In his final remarks Mr. Cigler said that women and children should not only be seen as victims, but also as actors in (post) conflict situations where they have a positive contribution to make. Decision makers on the ESDP need to be aware of this both and ensure that ESD missions are being trained on gender mainstreaming and supporting children’s rights. NGOs can play an important role in that as they can offer their grass roots experience as a contribution to the training programmes.

The digital version can be found on the websites: <http://www.isis-europe.org/>, and www.eu2008.si; www.eu2007.pt; www.eu2007.de.

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