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I. O. BALASHOVA

National Academy of Internal Affairs, Kyiv, Ukraine

WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING

Women are deployed in all areas – police, military and civilian – and have made a positive impact on peacekeeping environments, both in supporting the role of women in building peace and protecting women's rights. Women and men experience conflict differently and therefore understand peace differently. In all fields of peacekeeping, women peacekeepers have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts.

The blueprint for gender and peacekeeping work for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is rooted in Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) which was the first Resolution to address the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women. The aim of this resolution is not only to increase the number of women serving in the military, but to mainstream gender by bringing about a greater sensitivity to the different effect that war has on men and women.

The increased recruitment of women is critical for: empowering women in the host community; addressing specific needs of female ex-combatants during the process of demobilizing and reintegration into civilian life; helping make the peacekeeping force approachable to women in the community; interviewing survivors of gender-based violence.

Nozipho January-Bardill, a South African special advisor to UN Women, outlined three areas in which women peacekeepers are more effective than men. First, they are less aggressive. "Women prefer for people not to be killed. If there's a choice, women opt for life," she said. Second, women tend to have a better approach to dealing with conflicting parties. Third, when it comes to violence against women, female peacekeepers are better-placed to deal with victims, who implicitly trust women more – because it is almost always men who have perpetrated the violence against them.

To achieve sustainable peace and security, all members of society need to be equal in terms of opportunities, decision making participation and protection.

Language advisor I. Ye. Novikova