

2. Address by Dr. Ágnes VADAI in Section 2 of Women in public life

During today's presentation, those addressing the audience before me have depicted a shocking picture of the status of women suffering in conflict zones. It is terrible that women regarded as highly threatened in the time of peace become even more vulnerable in conflict situations since they are defenseless against violence and torture, while their lives are also at risk. I welcome Resolution 1820 of the UN Security Council that qualifies violent sexual acts against women living in conflict zones as war crimes. I can only hope that this resolution will help women and girls barely keeping body and soul together in facing less suffering.

Nevertheless, I wish to highlight another aspect of the subject matter. This is the place and role of female soldiers in armed conflicts. As you are aware, women too serve as soldiers in peacemaking and peacekeeping missions in certain conflict zones. The presence of female soldiers in peace missions has dual benefits. On one hand, they reduce stress among peacekeepers. Alcoholism is demonstrated to be substantially lower in peace mission forces where women also serve. On other hand, female soldiers do great service in liaising with the civilian population. This is particularly true in conflict zones where female members of the population are not allowed to communicate with male soldiers due to common law or religious prescriptions, or when women are distrustful of men due to violent actions committed against women but allow female soldiers closer to themselves. Therefore, I find it important for this forum to conclude it as a direction to be pursued that the ratio of female soldiers should be increased among soldiers participating in peace missions. Thank you for your attention.