



GENDER AND DISARMAMENT: INCREASING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted a landmark resolution that established the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Among other things, Resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. In this regard, the resolution urged UN member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in relevant national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms. Ten years later, on December 8, 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 65/69 that recognized the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament measures and called for the equitable representation and effective participation of women in decision-making processes on matters related to arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament. As a result, more women now participate not only in humanitarian, peacekeeping and post-conflict missions, but also in formal peace negotiations and multilateral security forums. Nevertheless, despite the visible progress, women still face problems and obstacles in this area.

Why does women's participation in the fields of arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament matter? First of all, women comprise half of the world's population, and this simple fact entitles them to an equal right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect their lives and wellbeing. Thus, including women in multilateral disarmament diplomacy serves the purposes of democracy and gender equality. More importantly, it is a harsh truth that women, along with children, are most vulnerable during times of war and conflict. While the majority of victims of armed violence are men, women bear the bulk of the burden of conflicts, without the support of their male partners, and face particular risks and challenges in war zones, including gender-based violence. It should also be noted that most men perceive weapons as tools that ensure power, security and prestige, whereas most women view them as instruments of destruction and murder. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate a gender perspective in peace and security activities, taking into account the differences in male and female experiences, perceptions and needs.

In recent years, the impact of women on international security policymaking has grown, both in the nongovernmental advocacy sector and at the intergovernmental level. The progress on gender issues is most notable in the field of conventional disarmament. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that regulates the international trade in conventional arms (entered into force in December

2014) became the first arms control agreement explicitly recognizing the link between weapons transfers and gender-based violence. Moreover, in its resolutions concerning the ATT, the UN General Assembly encourages its states parties and signatory states to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men in pursuing the object and purpose of the treaty. The fifth conference of states parties to the ATT held in August 2019 convened a thematic discussion on gender and gender-based violence that covered the issue of equal representation and meaningful participation of women.

In the nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament realm, the trend towards gender parity became apparent during a series of conferences exploring the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons held in 2013-2014. Notably, the argument in favor of enhancing the role of women was further supported by the scientific evidence proving that, over the longer term, women are biologically more vulnerable than men to harmful health effects of ionizing radiation and have a higher risk of developing cancer. There are also differences in the social, economic and psychological impacts of nuclear weapon detonations on men and women. Consequently, the issues of gender-specific humanitarian consequences and women's participation in nuclear disarmament negotiating forums were raised for the first time during the review process of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Other disarmament forums also demonstrate progress in this area. In particular, the first-ever side event on the relevance of gender for strengthening the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) was held on the margins of the BWC expert meetings that took place in Geneva in July-August 2019.

It is noteworthy that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the first legally binding international document that establishes a universal and comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons (adopted in July 2017, but still to enter into force), also addresses the gender theme. In its preamble, the treaty recognizes that "the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security" and commits to "supporting and strengthening the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament". The TPNW also acknowledges that nuclear weapons "have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation" and mentions the need for gender-sensitive assistance to individuals affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, while the number of women participating in arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament activities seems to be on a steady rise, the studies suggest that women remain underrepresented in multilateral forums concerned with security issues, including nuclear weapons. Moreover, there is a significant gender imbalance in leadership positions – the share of women tends to decline as the importance of the position increases. For example, in 2018, 76% of heads of delegations participating in these forums were men, while the overall proportion of male representatives was 66%. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that international relations are not free from deep-seated gender stereotypes, and security issues, often technically complex and politically sensitive, are traditionally considered as the male domain. Other perceived obstacles to advancing gender equality in arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament include the unwillingness to change the status quo, challenges of maintaining work-life balance, and the lack of women role models in these fields, particularly at senior levels. In this regard, of particular importance is the achievement of gender parity in the leadership of the UN Secretariat, with the equal representation of men and women, in accordance with the pledge given in 2017 by newly appointed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Overall, incorporating a gender perspective in the international security discourse through increased female participation is believed to help move the key arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament goals forward. In his Agenda for Disarmament, Antonio Guterres noted that "involving more women will help revitalize disarmament discussions and advance our collective effort to create a safer and more secure future". Indeed, the male-dominated international community has failed to date to achieve significant progress on nuclear disarmament, and it could be the lack of women's engagement that prevented the meaningful progress in this field. Gender diversity, on the contrary, will provide opportunities for different perspectives, fresh ideas and innovative solutions to be taken into account. However, securing the equal quantitative representation of female stakeholders should not become an end in itself as this alone will not make multilateral forums more inclusive and gender-responsive. It is more important to ensure the qualitative aspect of women's participation at all levels to reach genuine gender equality, especially with the emergence of new security challenges related to cybersecurity, lethal autonomous weapons systems, and outer space. Sustainable peace cannot be attained without the full and efficient involvement and contribution of both men and women.

Written by Dauren Aben,
Eurasian Research Institute, Kazakhstan

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev chaired the final meeting of the state emergency commission, with online participation of heads of regions and government agencies. Announcing that the state of emergency in the country was over, the president noted that the coronavirus disease still posed a threat, therefore quarantine restrictions will be lifted depending on the situation in each region. The head of state also put forward a number of additional measures aimed at supporting the economy and ensuring post-crisis development (Akorda, 11.05.2020).
- The Council of CIS Foreign Ministers held its meeting via videoconference chaired by Uzbekistan. The parties exchanged views on pressing issues of the international agenda and interaction within the commonwealth. They also examined a wide range of issues related to the further development and deepening of cooperation in key areas of the CIS activities. Particular attention was paid to joint efforts in overcoming negative economic and humanitarian consequences of the coronavirus pandemic (CIS Internet Portal, 12.05.2020).
- The foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states held a meeting via videoconference chaired by the Russian side. The ministers focused on the priority tasks aimed at developing the SCO activities in the context of the spread of the novel coronavirus. They stressed the importance of promoting international cooperation in order to overcome the social, trade and economic after-shock of COVID-19 and prevent its impact on regional and global security and stability (SCO, 13.05.2020).
- Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan Magzum Mirzagaliyev met with Minister of Water Resources of Uzbekistan Shavkat Hamraev. During the talks held in Shymkent, the Uzbek side agreed to conduct a technical audit of the Sardoba water reservoir with the involvement of Kazakh and international experts. The parties also agreed to develop and sign an intergovernmental agreement on joint management, use and protection of transboundary water bodies (Tengrinews, 14.05.2020).
- Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov held an online meeting with Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Lassina Zerbo. The parties discussed key areas of cooperation between Turkmenistan and the organization, including technical assistance and the participation of Turkmen national experts in CTBTO seminars and trainings (MFA of Turkmenistan, 13.05.2020).
- Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his main rival in the last-year presidential election, former Prime Minister Abdullah Abdullah, ended a months-long stalemate and signed a power-sharing agreement. Under the deal, Ghani will remain president and Abdullah will head the High Council for National Reconciliation to conduct peace talks with the Taliban. In addition, Abdullah's team will be able to nominate half of cabinet members and provincial governors (Al Jazeera, 17.05.2020).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- According to Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan Bakhyt Sultanov, the country's foreign trade grew by 2.7% in the first quarter of 2020 and reached \$21 billion. However, there was a significant downturn in domestic trade in the same period. The volume index of trade among the regions declined by 8.9% in January-April and by 34.8% in April alone due to the lockdown measures. The minister mentioned the construction of wholesale distribution centers and the development of e-commerce as priorities for trade expansion (The Astana Times, 13.05.2020).
- Turkmenistan sent an application letter to the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to join the WTO as an observer. In line with the WTO procedures, Turkmenistan's application will be considered during the next regular session of the WTO General Council. The issue of Turkmenistan's WTO membership was first raised in January 2011 during a visit of former president of the European Commission Jose-Manuel Barroso to Ashgabat (MFA of Turkmenistan, 13.05.2020; Fergana, 16.05.2020).
- Officials of Ukraine and Qatar held a phone conversation to discuss issues of trade, economic and investment cooperation. The parties paid particular attention to the implementation of promising investment projects in Ukraine in the fields of agriculture, transport and medical infrastructure. In 2019, the trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$90 million, which is the record figure since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations (Ukrinform, 15.05.2020).
- According to Russian Minister of Transport Yevgeny Dietrich, under an optimistic scenario, air transportation in Russia can decline by at least half to 60 million passengers in 2020 if flights will restart in July. However, if flights resume in the fall, as suggested by the basic forecast, the number of passengers will equal about 30 million, and the industry will be restored only by September 2021. In 2019, Russian airlines transported a record 128.1 million passengers (TASS, 17.05.2020).
- U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced that the first shipment of the U.S. oil would be dispatched to Belarus soon. The U.S. company United Energy Trading will deliver oil, with the assistance of the U.S. firm Getka and its Polish partner UNIMOT. According to Pompeo, the United States is ready to meet import requirements of countries like Belarus for energy resources. He also called on Belarus to increase the access of U.S. businesses to its market and undertake market-oriented reforms necessary to advance its WTO accession process (TASS, 16.05.2020).
- As announced by Iran's Trade Development Organization during a meeting with representatives of the country's private sector, Iranian exports to the Eurasian Economic Union's (EAEU) market in the category of preferential goods grew by 69% from November 2019 to the end of March 2020. Trade relations between Iran and the EAEU has strengthened due to the interim trade agreement signed between the parties (IRNA, 11.05.2020).

Society and Culture

- According to the statement made by Secretary General of the Turkic Council Baghdad Amreyev, the Fourth World Nomad Games, which were expected to be held in Turkey in 2020, have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Baghdad Amreyev expressed his confidence that "the Games, which are gradually becoming a world brand through the joint efforts of the member states, will be conducted in Turkey in 2021 in a way worthy of the common heritage of the Turkic-speaking states and peoples" (Turkic Council, 14.05.2020).
- The National Academic Library of Kazakhstan organized the international online conference themed "The Golden Horde – History of the Great Steppe" with support of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Institute of State History. A number of prominent Kazakh scholars participated in the event dedicated to the 750th anniversary of the Golden Horde. In his welcome speech, President of the International Turkic Academy Darkhan Kydyrali reported on the work of the academy related to the celebration of the anniversary (TWESCO, 14.05.2020).
- The government of Kyrgyzstan provided humanitarian assistance to the population of Uzbekistan affected by the burst of a dam at the Sardoba water reservoir. According to the decision signed by Kyrgyz Prime Minister Mukhammedkaly Abylgaziev, the Kyrgyz side sent 1,000 tons of cement, 100 tons of rice and 10 tons of vegetable oil to the neighboring country. Earlier, Uzbekistan sent aid to Kyrgyzstan in order to assist in combating the COVID-19 epidemic (Kabar, 11.05.2020).
- The Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan hosted an online presentation of the regional initiative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) entitled "New Horizons of Cooperation amid COVID-19 Pandemic". Turkmen officials, IOM experts, and representatives of the IOM member states and donor organizations took part in the event. Participants discussed the draft IOM regional initiative on coordinating cooperation for overcoming the impact of the pandemic, with a special emphasis on issues faced by migrants (MFA of Turkmenistan, 14.05.2020).
- In his letter to President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised the country's government for taking preventive measures in the fight against COVID-19. He also commended the head of Azerbaijan for his multilateral diplomacy initiatives aimed at coordinating national, regional and global responses to the pandemic, such as the extraordinary summit of the Turkic Council and the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, both held in the online format (Trend, 12.05.2020).
- The Association of Youth Governments of Russia organized a video conference for representatives of youth organizations of the EAEU member states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia) to discuss their potential for joint implementation of projects. During the conference, the parties suggested establishing the EAEU association of youth self-government bodies. The Association of Youth Governments of Russia was set up in 2009 and unites 4,000 members in 72 Russian regions (Kazinform, 12.05.2020).