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GLOBAL SECURITY TRENDS:

Human Security Bouncing Back

– Military expenditure has increased by 45 % since 1998. Now we are making choices like reaching all the Millennium Development Goals or occupying Iraq for one year. Or between one year of military spending and 600 years of regular UN budgets. These are our choices. The Secretary General of Kvinna till Kvinna, Lena Ag, called for a democratic debate about security at the international expert seminar on global security trends in Stockholm in January, organized by Kvinna till Kvinna.

Ekaterina Stepanova (speaking on cover photo) underlined the discrepancy between military expenditure and the threats people are facing globally. Olfat Mahmoud (top below) wanted political leaders to recognize civil society's actions in conflict areas, while Lena Ag and Hans Blix (below) highlighted the link between weapons and status in international relations.

Security – Whose Concern?

– The single most dramatic trend in armed violence in the last decade is that civilians are targeted more heavily now; directly and intentionally. Human security reflects the sheer reality on the ground – civilians should be the main subject of security because they are the main victims of conflicts, said Dr Ekaterina Stepanova, Programme Leader on Armed Conflict and Conflict Management at Sipri.

Adam Roberts, News Editor of Economist.com, called for a broader discussion on insecurity and what causes it, where economic and social issues should be given greater importance.

– There is a great deal of violence going on in non-war countries. In Zimbabwe there is no armed conflict, yet life expectancy is getting dramatically lower. There is a lot of non-violent destruction of people, whether it is through aids, cholera or hunger.

Sarah Masters, Women's Network Coordinator at the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) added that all the permanent members of the Security Council are producing and selling arms – and almost the whole world is buying.

At the same time, as Ekaterina Stepanova added, 100 times more people are dying from diseases than from armed conflicts.

– Military expenditure is disproportionate to the threats people are facing, said Ekaterina Stepanova.

> "Civilians should be the main subject of security because they are the main victims of conflicts"

Dr Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission questioned the common perception that 9/11 alone caused the shift from post-Cold War optimism to increasing military expenditure. He pointed out that the military industrial complex never disarmed after the Cold War.

– They have been exploiting the fear of terrorism to the absurd. I am not accusing them for deliberately causing conflicts, but there's no doubt they gain, he said.

The military solutions are seldom solutions, rather the opposite. Today, Iraq counts for 69 percent of all terrorism attacks world wide. Before the war the number was 7 percent.

– The war on terrorism feeds terrorism, as Ekaterina Stepanova put it.

Adam Roberts pointed out how "securitization" increases the status of an issue, as when in the 1990ies refugees were suddenly talked about as a security issue. The UNHCR became one of the leading UN agencies, its political power grew and more money flowed to the sector.

Ekaterina Stepanova said that the changing trend in displacement patterns is mirroring the changes in conflict patterns. While the number of international refugees is going down, the number of internally displaced people is growing. Now they are often the purpose of the use of violence, not a side-effect. And while people usually try

to return after combat, this happens much more seldom when civilians have been targeted intentionally.

– Displacement is a way to escape a threat of death. More displacement means fewer fatalities, in the short term. But if not met, displacement today means violence tomorrow, Ekaterina Stepanova said.

– People on the move are particularly vulnerable, Adam Roberts said. Migrants are particularly affected by the economic crisis and increased xenophobia in its wake.

Add Gender to Get the Picture

Olfat Mahmoud, Director of the Women's Humanitarian Organization in Lebanon, shared her experiences from the Palestinian refugee camp Bourj al Barajneh, where 20 000 people live in an area of one square kilometre. The camp was supposed to give temporary refuge but has now existed for 60 years.

– If we are not in war we are expecting war. We are also affected by other wars. Like now in Gaza. What will happen to us? Will anyone consult us on what we think? Are we included in any peace talks? Of course not! As Palestinians in Lebanon, we are not allowed to vote in any elections, others are negotiating on our part and we have no say on how they do that.

Resolution 1325 urges UN member states "to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts." However, women are still underrepresented in security policy making, eight years after the UN Security Council passed the resolution.

The gender aspect of security is also the focus of the Kvinna till Kvinna report *Security on whose terms? If men and women were equal (2005)**. The report says: "When women are insecure or threatened and have limited freedom of movement they cannot participate in peace and democracy work on the same conditions as men. Women's lack of security is in itself a threat to peace."

" but if you have a bomb, people talk to you"

Lena Ag quoted Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2008, Martti Ahtisaari's speech: "...In the future we must be better able to achieve a broader participation in peace processes. Particularly, there is a need to ensure the engagement of women in all stages of the peace process." Ahtisaari's team met with partners of Kvinna till Kvinna in Kosovo, who like many other women's organisations work on different sides of enemy lines, challenging their own fear and building trust.

– They are doing what their leaders should be doing. And our leaders should recognize, meet and listen to them, said Lena Ag.

However, a recent Kvinna till Kvinna study shows that the Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt completely neglects women's organisations in conflict areas. Despite commitments to implement 1325, there are no traces of this in his blog, his meeting schedule or his press releases. This way, crucial perspectives are left out of his security analyses.

Masculinity and Mass Destruction

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission writes in its final report that "...armament policies and the use of armed force have often been influenced by misguided ideas about masculinity and strength."

The statement wasn't debated after the release of the report, as was the case after Kvinna till Kvinna released its review of Carl Bildt.

– To silence these kinds of discussions is part of the strategy, said Lena Ag. She continued:

– Why do countries acquire nuclear weapons even if they don't perceive any direct threats? I think it's a matter of status. The notion of status is connected to military power. But it's not comme il faut to talk about that. If you do, you will be pushed aside.

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Sarah Masters (top left) brought up the increased risk even legal handguns involve to a household, particularly to the women living there, while Adam Roberts (top right) called for a broader discussion about the concept human security.
The participants (below) posed questions about international interventions and possible steps forward among other things.

Hans Blix recognized the importance of status in cases like Saddam and Khadafy.

– They were isolated, but if you have a bomb, people talk to you. We have to make them feel that they don't need a bomb. But I don't think there is a distinct and direct link between masculinity and nuclear weapons. It's a question of perceived security.

Hans Blix also stressed the importance of women being visible in the disarmament debate, and the need to reform the male dominated discourse.

Sarah Masters from IANSA told the audience about successful local disarmament projects in which the prestige for young men of having guns are replaced with the power and prestige of giving something back to the community.

– We have to hang on to stories like that, Sarah Masters said.

Small arms were called "weapons of mass destruction" by Hans Blix, as they are killing 1000 people every day, of which 250 deaths are battle related. According to IANSA, in South Africa, a woman is shot dead by her current or former partner every six hours. And in the US, having a gun in the home increases the overall risk of someone in the household being murdered by 41 percent. For women, however, the risk of death is tripled. Even when guns are not fired at women directly, they are often used as a tool of intimidation to facilitate rape and other types of physical and psychological violence against women.

– You become sad when you watch all the violence, then you get angry. And you have ways to show your anger. And because of war and lots of things, lost jobs, destroyed factories, men become aggressive, they have to redefine their male role, it is really a problem. When you see people hitting each other, when you watch 24h broadcasting of the Gaza war, aggression becomes normal said Olfat Mahmoud.

Critical Role for Civil society

Lena Ag as well as Sarah Masters brought up the role of women's organisations in creating conditions for peace talks and disarmament, Sarah Masters talked about the role of women in disarmament in Liberia, a very significant but quite unrecognized contribution to the peace process. Ekaterina Stepanova also underlined the importance of civil society organisations when she touched upon one of the recent negative trends in the peace business:

– The greatest failure is not in conflict resolution, but in conflict prevention. That is the greater role that civil society organisations should play, as early warning actors. States fail to do it, it is a huge field for civil society organisations to at least draw attention to the problem and work more actively to solve it.

– The specific characteristic of the human security approach is that it offers a solution, not only a perspective – you cannot solve these issues at the level of state. Civil society plays a critical role to this approach. Human security is not only putting focus on threat mitigation, but also on the capacity of local communities to meet these threats, said Ekaterina Stepanova

Human Security is Here to Stay

So, will human security bounce back in business in 2009? Is there any hope for

“– Chairing the EU, Sweden should raise awareness about the EU's Common Position on EU arms exports”

a more inclusive discussion, where strategies and actors are better adapted to the threats humanity is facing today? The panellists showed careful optimism.

– We are living longer today. Congolese militia leader Lubanga is being tried in court for using child soldiers, there was a land mine ban recently, we are finding ways to deal with aids and we are motivated by compassion and love as well. There are some reasons to be hopeful to, said Adam Roberts.

Ekaterina Stepanova said the question was wrongly put.

– The human security approach was never out of business, it is just evolving slowly, step by step. It is here to stay for the foreseeable future, not universally accepted but slowly. Who could imagine so many countries signing the anti-cluster munitions convention? The climate is changing.

Lena Ag said that the threats to security that were discussed are all man made, which means they can also be changed by political decisions. She also called for a revision of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts that was adopted during the Swedish presidency in 2001 and highlighted the importance of the Global Zero initiative to ban all nuclear weapons, launched at the end of 2008.

– Chairing the EU, Sweden should raise awareness about the EU's Common Position on EU arms exports, and how some countries - namely Italy and the Netherlands - are acting against it by allowing the transit of weapons from the US to Israel, said Sarah Masters.

She ended by pointing out that 2009 marks the beginning at UN level of a process for a global Arms Trade Treaty, where input from women’s organisations is crucial.

Hans Blix said he would like to bounce back to the early 1990ies and the sense of progress that existed then.

– We have fallen seriously since then, with the fear of terrorism and the recent arms races. But a lot has happened on the human rights scene, significant events that need to be recognized. The UN has lasted for 65 years and we haven’t had any new world wars. There are a number of conventions, tribunals for war crimes and trade disputes – an institutionalisation of the international community. And there is an increased consciousness of the importance of the status of women. I think women could and should contribute more in the international debate, not because women are wiser than men but because we are equal.

Olfat Mahmoud gets the final word. – Promoting security and peace through human rights is what we try to do. It should be bottom-up, not top-down. People should feel security. We have to meet their basic rights, this is very essential. Conflicts, lack of education, human rights violations - all this increases terrorism. The only way to stop this is to look at human security. I think terrorism is more related to lack of human security than to weak or failed states. It is not that difficult.

According to Hans Blix, women could and should contribute more to the international debate.

The seminar Will Human Security Bounce Back in Business in 2009? took place in Stockholm, January 28, 2009.

PANEL:

Dr Hans Blix, The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission

Dr Ekaterina Stepanova, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Olfat Mahmoud, Women’s Humanitarian Organization, Lebanon

Sarah Masters, The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Adam Roberts, The Economist

Lena Ag, Kvinna till Kvinna

Per Wirtén (moderator), Arena Magazine

* The complete study can be found at www.kvinnatillkvinna.se

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