

**Speech by Uri Rosenthal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands,  
at the launch of the Dutch National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325**

**De Waag  
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*The Dutch National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me at this important event: the launch of the second National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

It is good to see so many representatives of organisations that support the implementation of this important document, as well as distinguished members of the Dutch parliament who supported this process from the very beginning!

On 4 December 2007 the Netherlands adopted its first National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The broad-based support made it unique. Like the first plan, this second one is based on the idea that government and civil society are complementary. The Dutch action plans have set a good example for other countries: Germany, Argentina, Ireland and others have asked for our support in developing their own national plans.

The Dutch action plans are in line with the three pillars of our foreign policy: security, freedom and prosperity. In today's world, these issues are closely interconnected. Violations of individual freedom may sooner or later generate instability. Security and freedom are vital to economic growth. Conversely, growth in the private sector helps foster stability and freedom. And, then, freedom, justice and peace in our world are founded on the recognition that all men and women are born free and equal in their rights.

In processes of peace-building and security, there can be no sustainable solutions if women's voices and roles are discounted or ignored. Experience shows that amplifying women's voices in these processes from the start is conducive to long-term peace and stability.

The first 1325 action plan led to a stronger focus on the role of women in our work on peace and security. In the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, the fight against sexual violence as a weapon of war has received more attention. The Netherlands contributed to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1820, which condemns gender-based violence in war in the strongest possible terms. Together with the Spanish government, the Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence set up the successful training course 'A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Operations' for civilian and military personnel sent out on peace operations. These are just a few examples of how the first National Action Plan has changed our ways of working and thinking.

The first National Action Plan focused more on physical safety and legal certainty for women and men. This second plan on its part is dedicated to promoting female leadership and political participation in conflict-affected societies. Peace and security are linked to active, powerful roles for women. It was good to see that the Nobel Prize Committee this October honoured three extraordinary women for their commitment to democracy and human rights: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman. They show us that women play a vital role in our society, the economy and politics.

On 26 November it was my privilege to speak with one of these women, Tawakkol Karman from Yemen. She told me that although little progress has been made in her country on women's rights in the last thirty years, in the current revolution, women are no longer victims. Instead they are standing up as active and politically relevant members of Yemen's economy and polity. As in Yemen, women in many other Middle East and North African countries want to make a difference. We in the Netherlands want to support their efforts. So we spend part of our development budget for their work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Rights and opportunities for women are not just an added bonus. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on the tenth anniversary of UNSC 1325, they are a ‘global security imperative’. And she added (my favourite phrase), later on, that we should not consider women to be victims, but we should approach them as future leaders in the world. Women represent 50% of human capital. I would say that it is in every country’s interest to make sure that women are actively involved in society, the economy and political decision-making. And to be more clear about it, women must be part of the *power* structures – that is what *empowerment* is about. Active involvement and inclusion of women are simply making for positive economic outcomes. Our goal is to improve political participation of women at the local, national and international level, and I would again say: taking an active part and fair share in the power structures at hand.

The National Action Plans are founded on the belief that we should complement each other’s efforts and that ownership should be vested in the countries for which activities have been developed: countries like Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo Sudan and South Sudan. Thus, the Afghan Women’s Network together with Dutch and international NGO’s and in partnership with the Dutch and US governments and the UN, has been promoting political involvement by women in Afghanistan. These joint efforts have encouraged more women to pursue national political office. For the first time ever, women were admitted to the Peace Jirga. These are big steps forward.

Let me emphasize that national ownership is a key to making stabilisation and reform effective and enduring. For that matter: our Burundian counterparts told us that they were looking for ways to include women in their security sector. The Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence took up these recommendations. They put women’s role and interests at the heart of their discussions with the Burundian army and police. As a result gender is now one of the main priorities of the Burundian security sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With this second Dutch National Action Plan on 1325, we aim to consolidate and extend the access to rights and freedom that women have already won. The Netherlands will continue to emphasise that men and especially women in local communities, living the daily reality of a conflict, are crucial for any intervention. For that matter, our second National Action Plan is definitely demand-driven.

Women across the world involved in peacebuilding, reconciliation and democratisation will continue to find the Netherlands at their side. We share the responsibility for honouring our common commitment.

Thank you.