



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

STATEMENT

**EWL Statement:
Empowering women in peace and conflict
January 27, 2010, Brussels
delivered by Myria Vassiliadou, EWL Secretary General**

Thank you very much for all your inspirational speeches and for giving me the opportunity today to address you on behalf of the European Women's Lobby, the largest coalition of women's organisations in the EU on a subject, which is of great concern for many of our 2500 member organisations across Europe. We recently adopted a Position Paper on Women, Peace and Security, which is available in this room, and where we clearly state our concrete demands and recommendations to the European Union.

The EWL has had the privilege of working very closely with Vice-President Wallström as part of our 50/50 campaign on equality between women and men in decision making, signed by over 300 high ranking political figures from across Europe – including the Vice President of Spain Teresa Fernandez de la Vegas who is here with us today. We have directly witnessed the Commissioner's passion and commitment to women's issues and human rights so we thank her for this event today. We hope that she will be able to continue her work in a position that will allow her direct involvement in the future in this matters – we rely on that.

First, it is necessary that women's rights' concerns are present and mainstreamed in the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy.

Second, some progress was made through the UN Resolutions in relation to women's positioning within issues of peace and security; but we are yet to see this translated into concrete action to make gross violations of women's human rights history. We all stress here today the absence of women in key diplomatic positions and crucial decision making posts. I insist that this is a persistent and direct barrier to the integration of human security and women's rights' concerns in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace building and post conflict resolution and reconstruction.

For us, the problem is certainly not what to do – we know very well what to do- but whether we want to do it. The real problem is the lack of true political will and commitment to include women and gender equality issues into all the stages and levels as well as processes relating to conflict and peace.



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2010 could be a turning point for women's rights. We'll be celebrating 15 years of the Beijing Platform for Action and hopefully see the creation of a strong, fully funded new women's rights agency within the United Nations. We have four excellent UN SC resolutions. Many of the tools are there, they must be used.

The recent financial, economic and social crisis, as well as the recent enquiry and hearings of senior officials on the legality of the Iraq War in the UK, just highlight a much broader issue in relation to the current model of conducting affairs – what we argue **at EWL to be is a particularly male one. This model has now demonstrated its failure. It is high time for fundamental change.**

How military actions initiated by the EU or NATO become justified and what happens afterwards need to be reconsidered. We need concrete measures to reflect women's security needs and interests by actively seeking **alternative** civil, social and economic routes to the solution of conflicts and human security. And as we heard here today, human security is much more than the absence of war.

Amongst our many recommendations in the EWL Position Paper on Women, Peace and Security is precisely the adoption and concrete funding for the sustainable implementation of National Action Plans in the area of Women, Peace and Security – we call for this today.