61ST SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Side event
Italy

“Per aspera ad astra”
("through the difficulties up to the stars")
Women in the Italian Armed Forces and their contribution to the empowerment of local women in international operations

Background
Since 2000 more than 12,000 women have joined the Armed Forces and Carabinieri Corps in Italy, according to the same recruitment and training procedures applying to men. Women have the same employment opportunities as the male component, with no limitations or exclusions of any kind. They carry out assignments both on the national territory and in the main operational theatres in the various roles/corps and specialties, without specific differences. They are employed as airplane and helicopter pilots, tank crew members, aboard naval units, in territory control activities and as managers of some of the most important national harbours.

Examples of women’s empowerment through the military are Air Force Captain and pilot Samantha CRISTOFORETTI, the astronaut who spent 199 days aboard the International Space Station during expeditions 42/43; Navy Lieutenant Catia PELLEGRINO, commander of a Navy unit employed in the hard and sensitive rescue-at-sea operations conducted in favour of migrants; Army Captain and Medical Doctor Letizia VALENTINO, medical manager of a Special Forces Division, who served in various missions in Afghanistan and was the first woman to take part in the national research program in Antarctica; and Carabinieri Major Orivella MICELOTTA, a Company Commander assigned to various sensitive tasks with the Special Forces.

The added value women bring to humanitarian missions and missions conducted in the different theatres of operations, also through the implementation of targeted CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) projects, has proven increasingly critical as a catalyzing factor for the empowerment of local women. As it is well known, there are places where servicewomen are indispensable to get in contact with the female population, while respecting local culture and religious habits. In fact, check-point and search activities in urban centers can only be conducted by servicewomen and/or female civilian personnel, and the same can be said about female medical problems.

The Italian Armed Forces have understood the importance of employing women to fully implement the provisions of UN Resolution 1325/2000 and relevant resolutions regarding the adoption of the gender perspective, that is the need to identify and enhance, in developing the mission, the requirements, abilities and potential of the local female population. Special units, called Female Engagement Teams (FET), have been established to this end. They are equipped with specific tools, including linguistic ones, to enable cultural interaction and cooperation with the local female population. Such Teams undergo training at the HQ of
specialized international units, such as the Multinational CIMIC Group at Motta di Livenza, which – in missions where Italy is a participant – also provide the specialized assets required to implement CIMIC projects aimed at the economic empowerment of local women, also teaching them a job.

**Objectives**
1. Women’s empowerment through their participation in the defence function;
2. Identifying ongoing challenges to achieving the full empowerment of women engaged in the defence sector;
3. Using FETs in peacekeeping missions and assessment of their limitations as compared to METs (Mixed Engagement Teams);
4. CIMIC projects and kick-starting virtuous cycles of local women empowerment in the areas where missions are conducted (activities performed by Italian Armed Forces for the Afghan women professional training and the Somali women primary computer training).
5. Developing a shared action plan to be implemented to tackle identified challenges.

**AGENDA**

**PARTICIPANTS**

**Moderator:**
Rear Admiral Pier Federico BISCONTI

**Panelists:**
Captain Samantha CRISTOFORETTI
Lieutenant Catia PELLEGRINO
Major Orivella MICELOTTO
Brigadier General Antonello VESPAZIANI

**CONDUCT**

**OPENING REMARKS (2’)**
by Ambassador Inigo LAMBERTINI
Deputy Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Italy to United Nations

**MODERATOR (3’)**

[start video Capt. CRISTOFORETTI]

Speech Capt. CRISTOFORETTI (10’ – 12’)

**MODERATOR: (2’) [start video Capt. PELLEGRINO]**

Speech Capt. PELLEGRINO (10’ – 12’)

MODERATOR: (1’)

[start video Maj. MICELOTTA]

Speech Maj. MICELOTTA (10’ – 12’)

MODERATOR (3’):

[start video CIMIC] (2’)

Speech Brig. Gen. Vespaziani: (10 - 12’)

Moderator (1’).

Q&A (15’)

Moderator: Conclusions and Thanks