Thank you for your invitation to offer some opening remarks on the International Humanitarian law and Gender. Very important issues that rightfully deserve our full attention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must always keep in mind the values on which the European Union was founded upon. Adhering to these values is not on a voluntary basis. There are no exceptions and no fine print. There is no distinction between civilian and military entities, no geographic exemptions. We in the military, we take this issue very seriously. We acknowledge the fact that most of the crises either begin from or result in a serious breach of the International Humanitarian Law. They also have a humanitarian aspect. We understand that the first victims of a crisis, well maybe after the truth, are women and children.

There is another line of our thinking. If we are to lead by example, if we are to influence those around us and the world, then we have to demonstrate our full compliance with what we preach. We need to uphold the highest possible standards, especially when operating in crisis and conflict environments, showing that there can be no excuses or exceptions.
In line with the "Code of Conduct and Discipline for EU Civilian CSDP Missions" adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 July 2016 and the "Revised Generic Standards of Behaviour for CSDP Missions and Operations" (7 March 2018), our efforts move in two directions: internally and externally.

- **Internally**, Gender related pre-deployment training for all seconded personnel is an obligation which is imposed on all the sending states. We make it clear that the EU, its Member-States and participating Third Countries are to uphold a zero tolerance policy towards misconduct and criminal acts in CSDP missions and operations as a key guiding principle.

  - In addition Spain has been designated as the EU Military Discipline Leader for Gender. It is currently conducting a Training Requirement Analysis (TRA) in order to properly direct training on the subject.

  - At the same time, all 6 military CSDP missions and operations have a Human Rights and Gender Advisors/Focal Points within their ORBAT ("Order of Battle", roster), whose purpose is to provide adequate guidance to commanders in their external actions.

- **Externally**, all training programs provided by EU missions have gender and human rights as part of the training program. The protection of human rights and the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming are systematically addressed in all phases of the implementation of their mandates.

  - Just two weeks ago, EUNAVFORMED Sophia organised the first Project of Comparative Training on the theme "Gender" at its Headquarters in Rome, with the participation of Libyan Navy and Coast Guard personnel.

  - In July 2017, I participated in the United Nations Chief of Defence Conference in New York, where I had the
opportunity to discuss IHL and Gender with the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix and the Military Advisor of the UN, General Loitey. We all agreed that we should step up our efforts on these important issues and find ways to facilitate larger participation of women in our respective Missions. And we are working on that direction.

Despite the general acknowledgement of the importance of having gender advisors in the CSDP Missions and Operations, unfortunately, we have not yet reached the desired point, filling all the positions with gender experts. We still have double-hatted or non-experts for the job. In a nutshell, only 3 out of 6 Ops/Msns (EUNAVFORMED SOPHIA, EUFOR ALTHEA and EUTM Mali), currently have a qualified Gender advisor. Non-expert double-hatted personnel occupying the posts can provide little assistance to the Msn/Op Cdr whenever expert advice is required. Furthermore, non-expert personnel are sometimes unable to conduct proper analysis of the related situation on the ground.

Together with the EUMS, we have pushed for the insertion of a new position in the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSOR) within the review of the Mission Plans for EUTM MALI and EUTM RCA and will ensure that the same applies in EUTM SOMALIA during the review process. Whilst the effort to insert such position in the CJSOR is the EUMS responsibility, the manning lies with the M-S.

Concluding, I want to underline that a lot have been achieved the last three years. When I first visited our Operations & Missions only the Training Center in Kulikoro had HL and Gender Courses for the Malian Army. Now Gender and HL Courses, Advisors and related efforts are taking place everywhere. I don't want to sound extremely positive and optimistic but I believe that great steps have been made during this last period. I want to state that there is room for better coordination on these issues with the civilian EU missions in the areas where we are deployed. And not only EU Missions but also UN Missions and any other Mission from International Organisations
having the same values and the same policy. Together we can achieve more than each of us alone. And this is what we do.

Thank you.