

"A 1325 Call to Action": Ministerial-level Side Event

Saturday 25 September 2010, 9:30am – 12:00pm; UN Headquarters, New York, Conference Room 4 (TNLB)

Statement by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon

Welcome to this conference and thank you all for being here today. I thank the Permanent Mission of Canada for taking the lead in organizing this event.

In a month, we will mark the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

This landmark resolution raised awareness of the unique and grave issues that women and girls face during and after conflict. It has undoubtedly increased international commitment.

We can point to some successes. In countries like Afghanistan and Burundi, we have supported women's participation in post-war constitutional reform. In others, like Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone, we have helped to raise the proportion of women in the security forces.

But this tenth anniversary is a sombre occasion. Our achievements over the past decade have not met our own expectations.

Women are still excluded from peace processes. The security sector in most countries is still dominated by men.

When conflicts end, and international aid begins to come in, it is still not geared to the needs of girls and women.

And -- most tragically and strikingly -- women and girls still suffer gender-based violence, including systematic sexual attacks, in and around armed conflict.

The international community is still failing to protect the most vulnerable -- as we saw recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The results of this violence, for the victims and their communities, are devastating, and can last for years or decades.

And those who carry out these war crimes still generally go unpunished.

This issue is of such grave concern and urgency that the Security Council has passed two further resolutions on it, and I have appointed a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, to make sure that it gets consistent high-level attention.

How, then, can we turn the corner?

As the tenth anniversary approaches, we must move beyond rhetoric. I suggest some concrete commitments.

-- Above all, we must end the brutal and blatant violations of the bodies of women and girls during armed conflict and its aftermath.

-- We must put women at the front and centre of peace processes -- in negotiation and mediation, post-conflict governance and reconstruction.

-- We must create and implement the right laws, so that those who carry out such crimes are brought to justice.

-- We must develop National Action Plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000). So far, only 19 countries have done this.

-- We must review progress against reliable indicators.

But all these commitments will not make the difference we need without increased resources. Civil society groups cannot plan and implement their programmes when funding is not enough, or is unreliable because of donors' shifting priorities.

I urge those with the power to mobilize resources for this work to do so.

For my part, I will make sure that the United Nations system takes a more coherent, comprehensive and measurable approach to implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

And I will continue to work for women's empowerment, through all the means at the UN's disposal. The newly-created UN Women, under the leadership of Michelle Bachelet, will bring women's perspectives into all our work.

Women's issues are not an "add-on". They must be an integral part of all our thinking on peace and security.

Women are not only the victims of war.

They must play a key role in bringing peace.