

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Garen Nazarian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations

I join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on a topic that has gained sound public and political acknowledgment. Armenia aligns itself with the statement delivered this evening by Ambassador Serrano of the European Union. I would like to make some brief observations in my national capacity.

Let me start with a quotation from the Beijing Platform for Action: “Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development” (*A/CONF.177/20, annex II, para. 131*). Although a very simple and straightforward statement, it goes to the heart of what we are discussing today, namely, that gender equality and security go hand in hand.

Armenia takes note of some positive developments. During the past decade, the Security Council has put in place a normative framework for women’s participation in peace processes, the elimination of sexual violence in armed conflict, the protection and promotion of women’s human rights, and the mainstreaming of gender equality and perspectives in the context of armed conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction.

As noted by the Secretary-General earlier this year, many peace processes now regularly include consultations with women’s peace groups. In many post-conflict countries, the number of women in Government has increased dramatically, and they have used their public decision-making roles to advance women’s rights.

Despite the progress, however, much still needs to be addressed and accomplished, as the female voice is not always heard. In that regard, the most important item on the agenda is to increase the presence of women in decision-making processes. Women remain largely excluded, especially from efforts to find workable solutions to conflicts. We should further promote their participation.

The costs of conflicts are borne disproportionately by women and children. Since women pay the primary price when peace is absent, they are important stakeholders in peacebuilding. As such, the inclusion of women in all stages of the peace process guarantees a more lasting and representative settlement. A number of research studies have also indicated that women generally are more collaborative, and thus more inclined towards mutual compromise. Women often use their role as mothers to cut across international borders and divides.

We have experienced this first hand in our region. Earlier this year, representatives of Armenian and Azerbaijani women’s non-governmental organizations discussed ways to find peaceful solutions to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. The peace dialogues are oriented towards increasing the role of Armenian and Azerbaijani women in peace processes and towards the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). More meetings between the sides are expected to take place.

As we discuss the role of women in peacemaking and peacebuilding, we cannot ignore an issue that is inextricably tied to it — violence against women and girls in conflict situations. It is unfortunate that, despite the existence of international legal instruments and normative mechanisms, there has been a disturbing escalation in levels of sexual violence during and after armed conflicts.

During the past decade, particular attention has been paid to addressing some of the specific crimes experienced by women and girls during armed conflict, namely, rape, trafficking, enforced prostitution and enslavement. It is critical to ensure accountability for past and present crimes and not to grant impunity to perpetrators. Otherwise, we would provide amnesty for future crimes.

Having had the privilege to chair the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women earlier this year, I would like to emphasize that special attention needs to be paid to children who are victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, especially girls, who are usually the largest group of victims in armed conflict. In addition to the physical damage, sexual violence often leaves lasting harm and stigma.

By recalling the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as relevant provisions contained in instruments of international law, the Commission on the Status of Women has expressed grave concern about the continuation of armed conflicts in many regions of the world and about the human suffering and humanitarian emergencies they have caused.

Peacebuilding needs the involvement of women. Women's roles in peacebuilding in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and many other places in recent decades highlight the importance of their full participation. Women need to be present to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security if just and enduring peace is to be built. Armenia will continue to work closely with the United Nations and all other interested parties — including the newly established UN Women, under the competent leadership of Michelle Bachelet — to implement and expand the agenda of resolution 1325 (2000), with a view to bettering the situation of women around the world.