

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

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Joy Ogunu, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations

My first words must be to commend you, Mr. President, for convening this auspicious debate to mark a decade since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). I must also thank the Secretary-General for his report in document S/2010/498 and indeed for his earlier report in document S/2010/466, on women's participation in peacebuilding. We believe that both reports exhaustively consider how we can together better the situation of women at every stage of the conflict cycle.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the presence of several ministers, Economic and Social Council President Hamidon Ali and others who have joined us to mark the anniversary. I congratulate and welcome in particular Ms. Michelle Bachelet in her new role as Executive Director of UN Women. Nigeria recognizes the value of pooling the efforts of the various United Nations actors in this area. We are certain that Ms. Bachelet and her team will make a major contribution to mainstreaming gender perspectives in the area of women, peace and security.

It is a well-known fact that women rarely initiate violent conflicts, yet they suffer its worst consequences on multiple fronts: physically, psychologically, economically, socially and politically. Too often, women fall victim to predatory warlords, who systematically use rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war. Their suffering is compounded by their exclusion from key decision-making processes that might lead to peace and stability.

As sombre as that background may be, there is reason to celebrate the modest progress made in the first decade of resolution 1325 (2000).

At the global level, the Council has devoted more attention to the issue of on women and peace and security, leading to the adoption of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). The appointments of Ms. Wallström as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and of Ms. Bachelet to head the newly created UN Women combine to give greater impetus to the efforts to place women at the top of the global agenda. Taking into account the work of other United Nations actors, the Organization's collective effort on resolution 1325 (2000) this past decade has been very significant.

Nigeria is pleased to count its achievements as part of that modest progress. Our priorities on women can be summed up in four words: empower, prevent, protect and promote. We acknowledge the pivotal role that women play in conflict prevention, and we pay particular attention to their unique vulnerabilities in time of conflict.

In all aspects of Government, including our military and policing strategies, we have worked to ensure that women are adequately represented. We have eight female ministers in the Federal Executive Council, eight female senators and 280 female judges, including three on the Supreme Court of Nigeria. The highest-ranking police officer in Nigeria's centralized police force is a woman. In 2007, a Nigerian woman was elected for the first time in Africa as Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nigeria's fourth highest political office.

As a signatory the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Dakar Declaration of last month, Nigeria has committed to accelerate the national and regional implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The Declaration calls for a regional action plan within ECOWAS to support national action plans. ECOWAS will coordinate and collaborate with the United Nations Office for West Africa and with UN Women in this process.

With 373 female peacekeepers, Nigeria ranks first among troop-contributing countries in the number of women among its military and police personnel wearing the Blue Helmet in ongoing peacekeeping operations. We believe that female peacekeepers have a comparative advantage when liaising with local

communities on matters such as sexual exploitation, abuse and violence. In this regard, we applaud the production this year of the analytical inventory of good practices used by military peacekeepers to prevent sexual violence against women and girls, and the overall increase in the number of women police officers and gender advisers in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions.

In spite of the hard work and oft-expressed commitments of the international community to the principles of resolution 1325 (2000), serious challenges remain. The Secretary-General observes in his report that “10 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), significant achievements are difficult to identify or quantify” (*S/2010/498, para. 3*). The July mass rapes in the Walikale region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reminds us of how ineffective our efforts in combating sexual violence still are. This is a failure not of one country or organization, but of our collective international response.

Nowhere is this failure more pronounced than in many of our decision-making structures, which underrepresent women in conflict prevention and peacemaking processes. Not only do we lose out on the unique contribution that women can make to peace and stability, but we also render ourselves complicit in their marginalization. It is little wonder that these omissions have contributed to poor social cohesion, fragile social value systems and the culture of impunity.

The Secretary-General’s report highlights areas of strength and weakness in our current approach. His recommendations, if supported, can enhance coordination and effectiveness. The problem of fragmentation and overlap in the United Nations system demands a framework for implementation and accountability. Given that the System-wide Action Plan has not resulted in measurable improvements in that contribution of the United Nations system to the empowerment of women in conflict situations, it is not a model for replication at the country level. We recognize the need for the further elaboration of the envisaged reporting template and guidance for data collection in order to ensure that the indicators contained in the Secretary-General’s report can be applied in order to truly monitor and appraise the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) worldwide.

The members of the entire United Nations family are accountable for the change that we all seek today. It is therefore vital that the Security Council take forward the indicators and remain apprised of the ongoing challenges in implementing the resolution. I would encourage countries that are yet to do so to develop and deploy their national action plans in line and in consonance with resolution 1325 (2000), and indeed make efforts to infuse gender perspectives into policymaking at all stages of the conflict cycle.

We believe that true peace can be sustained only when each individual human being achieves freedom, secures dignity and leads a fulfilled life. This is the ultimate aim of resolution 1325 (2000).