

Mr. Kamau:

I wish to thank you, Madam, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission during this important and timely open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. I also thank you, Madam, for providing us with a comprehensive concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) to guide the debate.

Since its establishment, the Peacebuilding Commission has supported the idea that women must participate in peacebuilding processes and contribute to decision-making in the reconstruction of their countries. The Peacebuilding Commission strongly believes that women's participation is crucial to inclusive, participatory and sustainable peacebuilding processes. The report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of peacebuilding architecture strongly reaffirms that ensuring women's full participation in peacebuilding processes is "crucial to the success of economic recovery, political legitimacy and social cohesion" (S/2015/490, annex, para. 56).

That understanding of women's role in peacebuilding is widely shared. The Security Council, in its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and in subsequent resolutions, including resolution 2242 (2015), adopted by the present Council, has given us a broad normative framework that I believe is universally supported by Member States. Yet as the report from the Advisory Group of Experts and as the global study on resolution 1325 (2000) reminded us last year, much remains to be done in practice to turn global commitments into reality on the ground.

That is also true of the work of Peacebuilding Commission. During its entire lifetime, the Commission has demonstrated a keen interest in gender equality and women's empowerment. Mirroring international policy developments, particularly the presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/466) on women and peacebuilding, and including his Seven-Point Action Plan, in 2010, the Commission developed its own declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding in 2013. Equally, the Security Council has adopted various resolutions on women and peace and security since the late 2000s.

While the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific instruments of engagement recognize the role of women in peacebuilding, translating formal commitments into concrete action on the ground has not been as systematic and efficient as we would like it to be. The high expectations for the transformative change and strengthening of women's participation in peace and security anticipated in resolution 1325 (2000) has not been fully delivered.

Yet despite the persistent exclusion of women from the loci of power and influence in many societies across the world, women have continued to make a significant contribution to developing inclusive approaches to security, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in their own unique ways. As such, women remain a resource that has not been effectively utilized or enabled to build sustainable peace.

Hindrances to women's participation in peace and security include cynical cultural practices that maintain patriarchal attitudes and norms; insufficient political will across the board to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000) and associated resolutions; militarized interventions and approaches to conflict resolution that tend to crowd out other organic initiatives within society that help build resilience, particularly during peacekeeping and countering violent extremism, which

put women at a disadvantage; and the absence of gender-sensitive economic recovery following conflict, which poses a barrier to women empowerment during transitions. Similarly, top-down bureaucratic processes in implementing the women and peace and security agenda have neglected the local ownership aspects that a complementary bottom-up approach would help bring about.

Those manifest bottlenecks have compelled the Peacebuilding Commission to embark upon the development of its first gender strategy, with the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNWomen. The strategy, which we expect to adopt before July, spells out specific recommendations to strengthen the substantive, cross-cutting integration of gender perspectives in all Peacebuilding Commission countryspecific thematic and strategic engagement. It identifies thematic priority areas such as women's participation in peacebuilding/mediation processes and prevention. It also identifies post-conflict governance and leadership, the rule of law, economic empowerment and access to basic social infrastructure — while emphasizing that men and boys need to be engaged as partners.

The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to use its unique leverage to advocate actively for dedicated technical expertise on gender equality and peacebuilding, as well as dedicated funding within the United Nations, and also among its national and international partners. The combination of senior leadership commitment, specialized expertise and dedicated financial resources is what can make a real difference. Her Excellency Ms. Julia DuncanCassel, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection of Liberia, reminded us just last week, in her address to the Commission on the Status of Women, that Liberia has been able to make great strides towards sustaining peace and empowering women economically thanks to the commitment of the national authorities, the in-country expertise from the UN-Women country office and catalytic funding from the Peacebuilding Fund. We should also not forget that Liberia is a country governed by a woman, and it was that woman who led the country out of a very difficult transition from war to peace, and the same woman who steered the country through another transition, a very difficult one, from a horrific epidemic to normalcy.

In Burundi, as stated by the Executive Director of UN-Women this morning, the same combination of leadership, strategic funding from the Peacebuilding Fund and in-country expertise allowed UN-Women to support a network of 534 women mediators working across all municipalities. By their count, women mediators addressed over 5,000 conflicts at the local level in 2015 alone. They have been tackling familial, social and land-related conflicts at the community level, which can easily become politicized and risk destabilizing communities. The mediators promote non-violence and dialogue, and work to counter rumours and exaggerated fears with verifiable information. Clearly, the inclusion of women is essential for achieving lasting peace in Burundi, and the experiences of the women mediators could be instructive for all stakeholders involved in ongoing dialogue processes.

Peace will be sustainable only with the participation of all the relevant national stakeholders, including civil society. The recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, was an important step towards greater inclusivity in peacebuilding. The role of young women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding is finally getting the recognition that it deserves. The Peacebuilding Commission also firmly believes that

young women are central actors, not just for the future of their countries but also for the present — starting right now.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Peacebuilding Commission is committed to advocating on behalf of women and young people and to using its intergovernmental approach and its convening power and leverage to engage national partners, to open up space for their participation and to help ensure that they receive the acknowledgment and dedicated support that they deserve. The Peacebuilding Commission gender strategy is an important step in the process of operationalizing a transformative women and peace and security agenda.

If I may, Madam President, I would like to add a special personal emphasis on the issue of gender. I have just come from Kenya, and I have witnessed again the ruin that 100 years of colonial and post-colonial policies have caused to the place of women in our culture and in our society. Women in Kenya, even today, 50 years after independence, remain firmly at the bottom on the rungs of social progress and empowerment. I cannot emphasize enough how conscious I am of the fact that gender is a central factor in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and the better future that we all want.

Realizing the ambition of a better more inclusive future and a sustainable world that achieves sustainable development — with sustainable peace and security for all at its core — will require that we respond forcefully and with determination to the issue and condition of women and girls in our societies. The centrality of gender issues within families and communities, especially with regard to the protection and promotion of girls and women, cannot be gainsaid. That is equally true within, and among, nations. That is why we are having this debate here today in the Security Council. But words without actions are shameful and futile. Global peace and harmony are intrinsically tied up with the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls everywhere. We must act accordingly. Let there be no doubt about that.

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