

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Gaspar Martins, Representative of Angola (SADC)

I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), namely, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Angola.

Allow me at the outset to commend you, Madam President, for including this very important topic in your agenda and highlighting it through this debate.

We thank the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Ms. Bachelet; the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; the representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; and Ambassador Kapambwe, President of the Economic and Social Council, for their briefings to the Council this morning. We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/598*).

SADC is encouraged by the progress achieved so far in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We feel that important groundwork has been laid for a long-term effort by the United Nations system towards the full implementation of that resolution. We welcome the increased political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in peace processes. It is important that we maintain the momentum to sustain the gains made to date. It is also necessary that we all make concerted efforts to fully realize the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000).

Achieving gender equality and empowering women are two of the key principles that propelled the founding of SADC, as reflected in the SADC Treaty. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development of 2008 put measures in place to ensure that women obtain equal representation and participation in all key decision-making positions by 2015.

SADC is concerned about the widespread and systematic sexual violence to which women and girls continue to be subjected in conflict situations, and it condemns the use of sexual and gender-based violence against women and children. It is our collective view that all parties to armed conflict should respect the regional mechanisms and international laws applicable to the rights and protection of women and children.

SADC has developed a strategy to address sexual violence against women and girls, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as a framework for mainstreaming gender within the SADC peace and security architecture. SADC member States have made progress in mainstreaming gender initiatives, especially with regard to the training of trainers on gender mainstreaming. In addition to that, SADC has initiated an advocacy strategy on informal cross-border trade, which provides a clear policy on areas of legislative action necessary for creating a favourable and enabling environment for women in trade, especially

informal cross-border trade. We are now witnessing positive results, especially in the creation of new business opportunities, expanded markets, new business connections and capacity building for business women.

SADC remains committed to efforts to promote the empowerment and advancement of women. However, despite some great steps towards that goal, women remain largely underrepresented in key decision-making structures and in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. The region believes that, when given the opportunity, women will become active agents of change and play a critical role in the recovery and reintegration of families after conflict. Women are also instrumental in bringing about reconciliation and democracy in post-conflict societies.

The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize is a good example of that. I would like to take this opportunity to stress that SADC attaches great importance to the creation of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN-Women. We express our complete availability to work towards the success of that new entity. SADC believes that UN-Women can play a vital role in helping developing countries acquire the skills required to enhance meaningful participation in decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Support of women's education in that respect will be an important prerequisite to achieving that objective.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate SADC's solid commitment to the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The international community as a whole has an obligation to women the world over, to ensure that their rights are protected and that their place in all aspects of the peace process is assured. It is their equal participation and their full involvement that will contribute to the effective maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace and security.

While progress has been registered in the implementation of the resolution, greater coordinated efforts are required to achieve the goal of its full implementation. In that connection, SADC welcomes the Council's adoption this morning of the presidential statement (S/PRST/2011/20).