

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

Statement by Mr. Tété António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations

Given the time allotted to us, I will try to state the essence of my statement, which has been provided to the Secretariat. I represent an organization that comprises a quarter of United Nations Member States, so we do have much to say.

I would like to apologize on behalf of Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra, who was unable to stay on in New York to participate in today's debate. I would also like to commend the Ugandan presidency for raising issues that are of great interest to Africa.

I commend the role of the Secretary-General, who despite being far away was resolved to address us this morning. I especially commend the United Nations commitment to Africa. This month, we launched the African Women's Decade in Nairobi, Kenya. The United Nations was represented by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, another African sister serving the Organization. We also commend the leadership of Ms. Bachelet. Her term has begun well with this energetic and busy meeting, punctuated for once by applause. We assure her of the African Union's cooperation.

I am compelled to begin by stressing the great interest that Africa attaches to the subject at hand. Africa is host to 70 per cent of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, so today's issue is of direct relevance to its peoples. I would like to thank all the women of the world for the solidarity they demonstrated, above all to the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, when they marched this month in Bukavu. In so doing, they manifested their solidarity with all the women and, by extension, the peoples of Africa.

I would like to offer some background. The African Union (AU) is about the same age as Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). I am sure it will be understood that this historic coincidence or opportunity has had an impact on the very structure of the African Union Commission, with its five female and five male Commissioners. That is a sacrosanct rule of the African Union. The Constitutive Act of the African Union incorporates gender elements from the international bill of human rights, as does the Union's Solemn Declaration on the Equality of the Sexes. This issue is clearly of great importance to the African continent and is reflected in its legal instruments.

Regarding the specific topic of today's debate, the African Union has continued to develop its specific policy and institutional capacity in this area. In July 2003, following a decision by the Executive Council, the African Women Committee on Peace and Development was strengthened to serve as an advisory body on peace and security matters and on empowerment and advocacy for gender equality in general to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The African Union Gender Policy, launched two years ago, stresses the need to reinforce good practices of respect, equality and human dignity between men and women in the workplace and in society at large, and to enforce zero tolerance for gender-based violence, sexual harassment, assault, rape, sexual favours, gender stereotyping, sexism and abusive language and actions in the workplace, society and situations of conflict. It stresses the need ensure severe sanction and punishment for perpetrators of such acts. It further calls for the use of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups as the basis for programmatic interventions in Africa, which should incorporate measures to prevent sexual abuse and pervasive discrimination against women and girls as weapons in armed conflict, and to promote their equal status in society.

The AU Gender Policy also calls for the mobilization of women leaders to participate in peace mediation and related processes and in post-conflict processes. It also calls for the AU to work jointly with relevant United Nations bodies on measures to track violations against women and girls during conflict and to find lasting solutions to abuses.

The African Union is further committed to working towards addressing violence against women perpetrated through human and drug trafficking, and to articulate the gender perspectives of child labour, prostitution and

abuse. Furthermore, the African Union has developed a gender training manual for AU peacekeepers, designed to be a resource for the African standby force and other hybrid operations, and for training institutions in troop-contributing countries.

Other important measures taken by the AU include the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the AU Gender Policy and the launching of the African Women's Development Fund. The AU has also taken measures in the context of the Regional Economic Communities in order to give further impetus to the efforts for overall gender equality in Africa. As is known, in February 2009, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union declared the period 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade, which was just launched, as I mentioned earlier, in October in Nairobi. We have also taken further measures in the framework of the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women. The AU, jointly with United Nations agencies in Addis Ababa, launched the Africa UNiTE campaign on 30 January.

During the African Union's Year of Peace and Security in Africa, 2010, the Gender Directorate of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa also worked closely with the AU Peace and Security Department and the Peace and Security Council to ensure that gender issues were well addressed in this framework.

I think I have to conclude my statement here. There are many proposals that are discussed in the written text that I provided to the Secretariat. But I would like to thank all the women who have played leadership roles in resolving conflicts in Africa, from Mozambique, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the ongoing conflicts in Somalia and in the Sudan.

In conclusion, I would like to join my voice to those who have called for the adoption of the indicators to help monitor implementation, address the issue of fragmentation in global progress in implementation and provide a basis for monitoring the success of national action plans in implementation.

That is a summary of what we wished to say this evening. I would like once again to thank the delegation of Uganda for having brought such a high standard to Africa's participation in the Security Council.