

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict- Affected Situations, October 18th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ambassador Gary Quinlan, Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

Mr President, Australia welcomes Azerbaijan bringing the Council's focus to the critical intersection between the rule of law and transitional justice, and the women, peace and security agenda. I thank the Secretary-General, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Pillay for their determined efforts. And Ms Brigitte Balipou for inspiring struggle on the frontlines. And I welcome Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as the new Executive Director of UN Women – we look forward to receiving regular briefings from her and other senior UN officials on the gender dimensions of conflict and across the thematic work on our agenda. It is integral to our work that you regularly provide such input. Thirteen years ago, Security Council resolution 1325 recognised the central role of women to the maintenance of international peace and security. But as the Secretary-General's report makes clear, while there has been some progress, typically the linkages between women's participation and the work of the Council are not made. The consistent inclusion in mission mandates of women, peace and security objectives, is fundamental to addressing this.

For the Council to remain responsive, it is critical that timely and relevant information and analysis is provided systematically by all UN actors deployed on conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. We commend today's resolution for clearly articulating this. As we know, it has long been recognised that women's engagement in conflict prevention and resolution, and peacebuilding efforts is more likely to lead to sustainable peace and security.

Of the over 2 million refugees from Syria today, 78 per cent are women and girls. Having fled the violence in Syria, they are attempting to navigate a tidal wave of new threats – sexual violence, mass forced displacement, early and forced marriage, forced pregnancies and exploitation. These circumstances must not prevent their vital contribution to reconstructing a safe and functioning Syrian society, and we must ensure that their leadership is harnessed as part of the solution.

For countries emerging from conflict, peace processes often lead to institutional reforms that establish new political, economic and social orders. Women's early participation in peace talks is critical, not only to their effectiveness, but to underpinning women's longer-term empowerment. Formal peace processes must reflect the reality that women are already undertaking peace work in their communities, and serving as agents of change as part of efforts to keep the fabric of conflict-affected societies together.

Local justice remains critical to the long-term healing and the reconciliation of communities, and affected States need to ensure accountability for conflict-related crimes. But to be effective, this must include justice for crimes of sexual violence. Fifteen years since the Rome Statute included sexual and gender- based offences as crimes against humanity and war crimes the inclusion of such offences in transitional justice arrangements must be mainstreamed. From prosecutions, to truth commissions, to reparations programs, effective transitional justice mechanisms must incorporate the situation of women.

Engaging women as leaders is critical to building sustainable peace. We must identify and address impediments that prevent women from participating in decision-making. We commend Mary Robinson's appointment as Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, and her long overdue approach to consulting early with women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We support the UN's ongoing dialogue with women's civil society organisations as a barometer of progress and a critical source of knowledge on the effectiveness of missions.

In post-conflict settings, women's full and effective participation is fundamental to efforts to rebuild the justice sector and to security sector reform. In Solomon Islands for example, Australia supported, through the Participating Police Force, the post-conflict recruitment and retention of female officers to the local police force. The early involvement of women, and the integration of a gender-perspective, led directly to the establishment of critical domestic violence and sexual abuses services. More fundamentally, it also underwrote the broader processes of community rebuilding.

Of course, ensuring women and girls' safety and security in conflict is instrumental to laying the ground for

gender equality initiatives. We look forward to the contribution that implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty can make to reducing gender-based violence in conflict settings, and we strongly encourage its ratification.

In concluding, Mr President The High-Level Review of resolution 1325 in 2015 provides a necessary opportunity to take stock of our successes, and to address the ongoing challenges in implementing the women, peace and security agenda. The Council's dedicated field mission ahead of this will be important in providing us with direct insights to help inform these discussions. But – of course – for women in conflict-situations, our review of the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda cannot wait. And we must continue, across the whole breadth of our work, to rigorously to strengthen the Council's consideration of the gender dimensions of conflict. Thank you, Mr. President.