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PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement

by Ambassador Gerhard Pfanzelter
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations

at the open debate of the Security Council on
"Women and Peace and Security"

New York
June 19, 2008

Madame President/Mr. President,

Austria associates itself with the statement by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union and welcomes the United States Presidency's initiative to organise this open debate and to submit a draft resolution on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Austria fully supports the measures contained in the Resolution to be adopted later today and is glad to announce that we have decided to co-sponsor the text.

The adoption of SC-Res. 1325 eight years ago has been a milestone in stressing the significant and active role for women in all efforts to promote peace. We have made visible progress in the implementation of SC-Res 1325 and we dispose of clear rules under international law to prevent violence against women, including sexual violence in armed conflict. Nevertheless the prevalence and brutality of acts of sexual violence against women and girls in conflicts and post-conflict situations around the world have reached a level requiring urgent attention by the international community and in particular by this body. Sexual violence is often not only a mere manifestation of war but rather a deliberate tactic of warfare. This and the adverse effects on peace processes, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction make clear that sexual violence against women indeed is a security threat.

The UN – leading by example.

We highly appreciate the important efforts already under way within the framework of “Stop Rape Now – UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict”. We also strongly support the system-wide campaign to end violence against women and hope to see significant progress until 2015. Also recent measures strengthening the enforcement of a zero tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers and related personnel constitute a major contribution. The UN have to be leading by example – sexual violence is unacceptable under all circumstances.

Austria has made a financial contribution of EURO 150.000,-- to the task force to end violence against women. And we will of course continue contributing to the UN trust fund on violence against women.

Empowerment and active participation of women will make a difference.

Women are severely affected by armed conflicts in multiple ways. Their experience is an invaluable contribution in peace processes, their voices must be heard. Women must have a seat and voice at negotiation tables. Regrettably women's representation in peace processes still constitutes an exception.

Austria in its National Action Plan on implementing SC-Res 1325 adopted in 2007 has made a clear commitment to lobby worldwide for women's participation in all peace efforts.¹ Conferences in Vienna last year bringing together Women leaders from the Middle East as well as from Serbia and Kosovo were important opportunities to establish networks which allow for the multiplication of their voices and influence.

We are encouraged by the Secretary General's recent appointments of women as Special Representatives and Envoys as well as to leading positions in the Secretariat. We hope to see more female appointments in the near future and thus reiterate our call on all Member States to support, encourage and nominate women for such positions. I would also like to urge all SRSG's and Envoys to make full use of the potential of women in peace processes and conflict resolution.

Strengthening the rule of law to end impunity.

International human rights law, international criminal and humanitarian law and refugee law, including non-treaty standards specific to women, provide a clear body of rules outlawing sexual violence, including in armed conflict. It is therefore of great concern that in spite of this, perpetrators who continue to systematically commit serious

¹ Austrian National Action Plan on Implementing SC Res. 1325 can be downloaded from the website of the Austrian Mission at <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/newyorkov>.

violations against women and girls still largely go unpunished. This situation demands further action of the Security Council to strengthen the rule of law to end impunity. Some of the existing mechanisms and tools of the Council have unfortunately been under-utilized. We therefore call on the Council to make full use of the range of measures and tools available, including the imposition of targeted measures and referrals to the International Criminal Court. We also call on Member States to strengthen the rule of law and fully utilize accountability mechanisms to bring to justice perpetrators of violations against women and girls.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the Final Report from the Austrian Initiative 2004-2008 on “The UN Security Council and the Rule of Law”, which contains 17 concrete recommendations how the Security Council could strengthen the rule of law in its various fields of activity. In particular, recommendations No. 8 and 9 address the implementation of Res. 1325 and the Secretary General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The report was recently issued as a UN document and is available in all official UN languages.²

For women war is not over when it's over.

Examples in recent post-conflict areas such as Burundi and Uganda have demonstrated that sexual violence against women and girls does not necessarily end with the cessation of hostilities but rather can become socially accepted. Although mainstreaming gender as well as the rights and needs of women and girls figure in many frameworks for peacebuilding, transitional justice, SSR and DDR, it often seems to be difficult to translate the general recognition of the importance of gender into concrete measures and to commit to their implementation. All stakeholders need to make more efforts not to fall into the post-conflict trap of focussing almost exclusively on the so-called “angry young men”, while neglecting the needs and rights of women. Peacebuilding efforts also need to focus on the establishment of a gender-sensitive

² UN Doc. A/63/69 – S/2008/270. Further information on the Austrian Rule of Law Initiative, including electronic copies of the final report and reports of previous panel discussions (in English) can be downloaded from the website of the Austrian Mission at <http://www.bmeia.gv.at/newyorkov>.

judicial system and need to comprise programmes targeted at the inclusion of women as judges, lawyers and lawmakers.

The crucial role of peacekeeping.

UN presence on the ground can make a difference for women in armed conflict. Regrettably the Security Council has often missed the chance to peacekeeping missions with mandates allowing them to effectively prevent sexual violence against women and girls. The credibility of peacekeeping operations is at stake if they are not able to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. MONUC which is mandated to strengthen prevention, protection and response to sexual violence can serve as a positive example. As a logic consequence, the issue of widespread sexual violence should be included in the regular reporting to the Security Council.

A higher percentage of female mission members can contribute to the success of such an operation. Increased recruitment of women for example can facilitate interaction with local women as a confidence building measure.

In order to achieve an integrated response, pre-deployment training has to be improved. In Austria we conduct a pre-deployment training on human rights focussing on the rights of women and children. The objectives of SCR 1325 are central elements of this training.