

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security**  
**November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Bliss Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations.*

Australia welcomes the convening of this open debate on women and peace and security. We commend Guatemala and India for bringing the Council's focus to the particular role played by women's civil society organizations. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Bachelet, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Ladsous, and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Diop, for their briefings to the Council, and reiterate our support for continued briefings on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Australia looks forward to working with others to move the women and peace and security agenda forward during our term on the Council.

We join other States in condemning the ongoing high incidence of sexual violence in conflicts, and support all efforts to prevent such crimes and to put an end to impunity for perpetrators of such crimes. That must be a priority for the Security Council and other parts of the United Nations system.

There is a clear consensus that the early involvement of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding promotes lasting peace and helps in the realization of gender equality. The fact that the Council has increasingly recognized that reality as it discharges its functions is to be welcomed.

As the Secretary-General's report (S/2012/732) makes clear, women's organization play an indispensable role in enabling women to prevent conflict and to promote and build peace. But women's organizations can only operate effectively in safety and with support. In that regard, Australia strongly supports the Secretary-General's call for the protection of women's human rights defenders during conflict situations, given their specific vulnerability.

Australia commends the increasing inclusion of references in United Nations mission mandates to the promotion of the rights, protection and empowerment of women. The gender awareness and responsiveness of United Nations personnel is critical, and Australia is pleased to be supporting these efforts through provision of training, a best practice toolkit for United Nations peacekeepers on conflict-related sexual violence and, in partnership with UN-Women, the development of a documentary and toolkit for peacekeepers, civilians and humanitarian personnel on women, peace and security.

In addition, such issues must not be overlooked in mission drawdowns and during transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Australia supports the Secretary-General's calls for the embedding of sector-specific gender experts, including in post-conflict recovery programmes, in order to ensure that the rights of women and girls are protected.

The importance of the United Nations leading by example in the area of gender equality is essential. Australia is concerned at the significant decrease over the past 12 months in the share of women holding senior positions in United Nations peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions. We support the Secretary-General's call for a review of this situation, in consultation with UN-Women.

Women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding is also crucial. The international community must work to facilitate women's full and equal political participation in post-conflict election processes, including by addressing the structural impediments that discourage women's candidacies. Ensuring women's safety during electoral processes and addressing their particular socioeconomic disadvantages are key factors in facilitating women's participation in formal decision-making roles.

In our region, Australia was pleased to announce in August our partnership with members of the Pacific Islands Forum on a new 10-year Pacific women's initiative. It aims at redressing the dramatic under-representation of women in decision-making settings, by bringing Governments and civil society groups together to develop policy and to help change perceptions about women's and men's roles in communities.

In March, Australia launched its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Women's organizations played a pivotal role in shaping the Plan, and we consider their ongoing role in monitoring compliance to be central to the Plan's success. We encourage all States who have not implemented such plans to do so, and to engage women's organizations in developing, implementing and evaluating these plans. In recognition of the growing role of regional security

organizations to international peace and security efforts, we urge them also to introduce strategies on implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

Australia supports the United Nations efforts to facilitate the sharing of best practices between States and women's organizations. We also recognize the leadership of UN-Women in coordinating global efforts to promote and implement resolution 1325 (2000).

Our actions to pursue the women, peace and security agenda do not occur in a vacuum. Work to promote the participation of women and girls in peace and security processes needs to take place within the broader context of work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The message is simple. Women and girls need to be actively involved in decision-making, not only to ensure that their human rights are adequately protected, but to prevent the outbreak of further conflict and to ensure that peace endures.