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Statement

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

at the open debate of the Security Council on
"Women, Peace and Security: Towards a coherent and
effective implementation
of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)"

New York
October 23, 2007

Mr. President,

Austria commends the Ghanaian Presidency for holding this open debate on achieving a coherent and effective implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement by Portugal on behalf of the European Union and would like to add the following remarks on a national basis.

Women are affected severely by conflict, but too often, they have no real say in peace negotiations, peace building and reconstruction. The adoption of resolution 1325 was an important step to acknowledge the significant and active role that women should have in all efforts to promote peace. Despite some notable developments, the full potential in conflict resolution and peace building by engaging women has not been achieved so far. There is no question that we need to address this gap as a matter of urgency.

Women across the world are ready to bear a key responsibility in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace building. Let me give an example: the search for peace in the Middle East is certainly one of the most urgent endeavours in international politics today. Women in the Arab world and throughout the Middle East have become a driving force for political, social, economic and cultural development. An International Conference on "Women Leaders - Networking for Peace in the Middle East" held in Vienna in May this year proved that women are ready to reach out to each other in search for dialogue and to establish networks for overcoming barriers and finding sustainable solutions. Austrian Foreign Minister Plassnik, therefore, raised the need for sustained involvement of women with the new Envoy of the Middle East Quartet.

Similarly, Austria has invited women leaders and experts from politics, business, media and civil society from Serbia and the Kosovo to come together in early November in Vienna at a symposium "Shaping our European Future" in order to contribute – beyond the ongoing negotiation process – to a peaceful co-existence and co-operation in the region and to a common European future of Serbia and Kosovo.

Mr. President,

The role of women needs further improvement within the UN system. Until very recently, there was not a single woman among the 54 UN Special Representatives and Envoys for conflict and post-conflict situations. The Women Leaders Network, co-chaired by Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, adopted at its meeting in Vienna a set of "Recommendations on the Empowerment of Women in the Area of Conflict Resolution and Peace Building". One of its key demands is a fair share of international mediation and peace building positions for women. The recommendations were brought to the attention of the Secretary General (A/61/1036). We are encouraged by his strong support and the recent appointment of Ellen Margrethe Loj as SRSG for Liberia and of three women Deputy Special Representatives. We hope to see more appointments of women to such leadership positions in the near future; we, the Member States, have to make sure to nominate more female candidates for such positions.

We are deeply shocked by the recent reports of an unprecedented wave of mass rapes of women in the Eastern Congo. Widespread sexual and gender based violence is ongoing in other conflict and post conflict situations. These acts are horrendous crimes for which those responsible must be brought to justice. They also have far reaching implications for the development of affected societies in general. For this reason, Austria is increasing its support to campaigns against sexual violence and assistance programs for victims of sexual violence in Eastern Congo.

Austria strongly supports the zero tolerance policy concerning sexual abuse and exploitation by UN personnel. It is simply unacceptable that peacekeepers and field personnel involved are still involved in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. We therefore lend our full support to the ongoing work on a draft Policy Statement and Comprehensive Strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff and related personnel.

Effectively mainstreaming a gender perspective into all peace and security issues from conflict resolution to disarmament, security sector reform as well as transitional justice is

a prerequisite for addressing the reality of women in conflict and post conflict situations. This requires an intricate understanding of the gender dimension and comprehensive information and data on the particular situation of women. To this end, the Security Council should consider the establishment of a permanent monitoring mechanism on the implementation of resolution 1325.

Mr. President,

In August this year, the Government of Austria adopted a National Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 1325. The plan was developed in close consultations among all stakeholders, including NGOs and academics. It foresees actions to be taken at national, regional and international level. These include the following:

- The percentage of women among Austrian personnel to peace missions shall be raised, including by offering specific incentives to women.
- Training programs for Austrian personnel in peace missions shall be reviewed in order to systematically address gender aspects and the rights of women, as well as a firm "zero tolerance policy" on sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Austria will continue to lobby for the full implementation of SC-Resolution 1325 in the EU and other regional and international organisations.
- Austrian development cooperation in post conflict situations will continue to focus on gender-specific programs.

The Austrian Action Plan is designed as a living document and will be reviewed annually. We are, therefore, very interested to share experiences and good practices with other countries. I am confident that the National Action Plan will be an effective tool for re-enforcing our efforts to fully integrate gender aspects into our activities in the field of peace and security.

Thank you, Mr. President.