

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 29 October 2008
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BELGIUM

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to convene this public debate on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and on the issue of promoting women's participation in peace processes. I also thank Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Ms. Inés Alberdi, Ms. Sarah Taylor and Mr. Alain Le Roy for their introductory briefings.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. Before turning to the specific issue of the participation of women in peace processes, I wish to voice the view that, eight years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we should ask ourselves — as Ms. Taylor has asked — about our implementation of that resolution. Despite the efforts of the United Nations system, described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/622), and the efforts we have all made, the resolution's objectives have not been attained. The situation of women in conflict and post-conflict zones remains worrisome — indeed, tragic. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in its entirety is the duty of all Member States, and their role and responsibility are vital.

By the end of this year, Belgium will present its action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The preparation of the action plan, in consultation with civil society, has been an enriching experience for all the Belgian political and administrative entities involved. The drafting of the plan has revealed a series of challenges both internally and with respect to our multilateral activities. For example, we have seen that the gender dimension must be mainstreamed in our fight to achieve a ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines and cluster bombs, whose primary victims are women and children. At the internal level we have seen that good gender-equality legislation alone has not been sufficient. Even though they may reflect firm political will, legislative texts must be combined with investment in know-how in the sphere of gender issues if they are to be implemented effectively.

We all agree that we need a better balance — parity — between women and men in international organizations, especially in the highest positions. To achieve that, more women must show their readiness to accept such high-level posts. In this, they must be encouraged and, above all, supported. As part of its policy on applications for international posts, Belgium actively encourages women candidates. You were entirely right, Mr. President, to place the issue of the participation of women in peace processes at the heart of our debate. Resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes and stresses the need to involve women in all aspects and phases of the transition in countries emerging from conflict, as well as in the peace process itself, in restoring the rule of law and in rebuilding economic systems.

One cannot restore lasting peace without the involvement of women. Ms. Mayanja pointed that out eloquently. We must involve women to a much greater extent in specific issues that arise at the end of a conflict. It is important that women are able not simply to state their needs, including with regard to justice and reconstruction; they must also be able to participate genuinely in the decision-making process.

Peacekeeping missions have the responsibility to ensure that the place of women in peace processes is assured. From the outset of a mission, the community of women at the local level, on

the ground, and, where they exist, women leaders must be encouraged and invited to defend and present their opinions and to participate in public decisions. The Security Council has an important role to play in that respect. Under- Secretary-General Le Roy also indicated that in his briefing.

Allow me to conclude by recalling resolution 1820 (2008), which deals with the problem of sexual violence in armed conflicts. In its condemnation of the use of all forms of violence and sexual violence against civilians, that resolution, as Ms. Alberdi said, is an essential complement to resolution 1325 (2000). The scourge of sexual violence must be eliminated without delay. For Belgium, that remains the priority in our overall implementation of the resolution on women, peace and security.