

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Maria Luíza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement to us this morning. I would also like to extend a special greeting to Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet, who joins us today for the first time in her capacity as head of UN Women. We are delighted at her appointment and pledge our full support to her.

I welcome the contributions of several ministers and high-level officials. I also recognize the presence of Ms. Margot Wallström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I am grateful to Ambassador Hamidon Ali, to Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and to Ms. Thelma Awori for their remarks.

Since its adoption 10 years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) has sparked a revolution of ideas. It has placed the role of women as agents of peace at the forefront of the multilateral agenda. It has made the case for the appointment of women to positions of decision-making related to peace and security. It has galvanized civil society and transformed the way it interacts with the Council. It has helped us to understand the importance of women in peacekeeping missions and induced many Governments to deploy more female troops and police officers and, in some cases, all-female units.

Yet much remains to be done. Sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war, and peacekeeping missions still struggle to protect women. The participation by women and the representation of women still represent small fractions of what those rates should be. But, at least today we have a much better understanding of the challenges we face and the goals we must meet. This is no small achievement and it should be celebrated and built upon.

In the discussions of ways to enhance implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the role of indicators has become a focus of our attention. Indicators are an important tool to improve information on the impact of armed conflict on women and on the role they can play in peacebuilding. They will enable us to respond more effectively and improve our action in protecting women and involving them in peace processes. Brazil welcomes such efforts and will closely follow the Secretariat's endeavours to render them operational.

Like much of resolution 1325 (2000), most of the indicators apply only to countries in conflict or emerging from it. Nevertheless, some indicators have a much wider applicability, such as the ones pertaining to United Nations field missions or investigation of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. This gives the set of indicators a truly global character. In this context we note with appreciation the wide-ranging consultations undertaken by the Secretariat with regional groups while preparing the indicators.

Valuable as they may be, indicators are not enough. They are but a means to an end. We must work harder to effect concrete changes through action. It is important to increase engagement by the Governments concerned. National action plans are important vehicles in this regard, especially if they also involve a broad range of actors, including civil society. It is also important that action plans be supported by adequate funding.

If women's concerns and needs in conflict situations are to be properly addressed and if women are to play an equal part in maintaining peace, they must be politically and economically empowered. Representation at all levels of decision-making and access to economic opportunities are key in this regard. In post-conflict situations, where institutions are rebuilt and gradually consolidated, there is often a window of opportunity to surmount historical gender inequalities. In that context, it is essential that constitutional, political and educational reform processes, as well as programmes aimed at economic revitalization, give special attention to the role of women.

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding are important ways by which the United Nations can strengthen the role of women as agents of peace; so much so that empowering women and protecting their rights should not be the exclusive task of gender advisers in peacekeeping operations, but rather a responsibility shared by all mission components. Mission-wide strategies, encompassing United Nations country-teams and other actors whenever possible, can develop protection plans, ensure that the voices of women are heard, facilitate women's

participation in peace negotiations, foster women's leadership and organization, and promote capacity-building that will support women's empowerment. We commend the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the progress it has made in this regard and welcome the suggestions just offered by Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy to further strengthen women's role in peacekeeping.

In my own country there has been compelling evidence that, when women are empowered, they can act successfully to change their lives and the lives of those around them. Under "Bolsa Familia", a conditional cash transfer programme that has lifted millions of Brazilians out of poverty, women are the preferred recipients of transfers. As a result, their bargaining power in family relations has increased, and their influence has become stronger on issues such as family planning, education of children and use of the family's income. Although Brazil's reality differs greatly from those of post-conflict countries, we feel that our experience validates a principle that is essential to the promotion of women's role in such societies.

That is why we are actively seeking to ensure that women and their needs are taken into account in our cooperation with post-conflict countries. Two examples come to mind, both regarding Haiti: our collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund and with OXFAM to support the implementation of Haiti's National Plan for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, through capacity-building and awarenessraising; and our support to establish a trades and services vocational training centre, which will have programmes especially geared towards women.

In conclusion, resolution 1325 (2000) has enabled us to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the transformative role women can play in conflict and post-conflict situations. We must strive to ensure that its goals are fully realized.