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STATEMENT BY

**AMBASSADOR PAUL HEINBECKER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

ON

WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24, 2000

DÉCLARATION DE

**L'AMBASSADEUR PAUL HEINBECKER
REPRÉSENTANT PERMANENT DU CANADA AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES**

AU CONSEIL DE SÉCURITÉ DES NATIONS UNIES

SUR

LES FEMMES ET LA PAIX ET LA SÉCURITÉ

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*Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations • Mission permanente du Canada auprès des Nations Unies
885 Second Avenue, 14th Floor • New York, N.Y. 10017 • Telephone (212) 848-1100 • Facsimile (212) 848-1195
<http://www.un.int/canada>*

Mr. President,

First, we congratulate you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to hold a thematic debate on this important subject. It has, until recently, been virtually absent from Council discourse.

I, also, wish to express the appreciation of the Government of Canada to the Secretary-General for his ongoing efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations.

I would like to stress how we appreciate the participation today by Assistant Secretary-General Angela King. Ms. King, we hope your presence here will become a much more regular occurrence.

Finally, we are equally pleased to welcome Mrs. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM, to the Council.

Mr. President,

Modern conflict no longer respects the line between the military and the civilian. But it does have differentiated impacts on men and women and on girls and boys. With resolutions 1265 and 1296 on the protection of civilians, resolutions 1261 and 1314 on children in armed conflict, and the statement to the press by the Council president on International Women's Day this year, the Security Council has made progress in acknowledging these very different realities. We recognize the need to craft gender-sensitive measures to ensure that women and men both benefit fully from efforts to build peace. We must build upon this momentum.

We must also ensure that our focus is not restricted to issues of the victimization of women -- vital as it is to grapple with them. We must also address ourselves to the positive contribution that women - irrespective of their age, class, ethnicity, race or any other status - can and do make to conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding.

In resolution 1265, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to ensure that UN peace support personnel have appropriate training, including in gender-related issues. In support of this effort, the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom have developed gender training material for military and civilian personnel. This initiative goes beyond important questions of more equitable representation of women in peace support operations or codes of conduct for international staff. It explores how to respond to the different experiences and needs of women in armed conflict, including respect for and promotion of women's human rights. It seeks to heighten gender sensitivity across a range of activities, from mine action programming to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the drafting of new laws and constitutions. Canada looks forward to working with other Member States in advancing this work.

Peace support operations need new skills, attitudes and ways of working to create the environment in which such training finds fertile ground. The deployment of women into the field - including as peacekeeping and civilian police personnel as well as SRSG's and Special Envoys - will deliver such innovative thinking and methods of work. Missions should also include experts to serve as focal points on gender issues or be equipped with full units to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into their activities.

Gender considerations must likewise be central to decisions about the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance. Women and girls are profoundly affected by conflict, whether they be caught up in its midst, in flight or in camps, dealing with its aftermath or reconstructing homes and societies. Conflict can impose new burdens and change women's roles. Women also experience personal insecurity differently than men. For example, women in refugee camps are more vulnerable to violence if the camps are poorly lit; if they have to travel great distances to collect water, food and firewood; or if latrine facilities are poorly located and constructed.

Gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance can mitigate the different and negative effects conflicts have on women, especially when it takes into account changes wrought by crises, for example by recognizing new responsibilities of women as heads of households or communities. We welcome recent initiatives such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee policy statement for the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance, the ICRC's Women and War project, and the decision to mainstream a gender perspective into the Sphere standards which seek to develop universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian assistance. We look forward to the implementation of these initiatives in the field and at headquarters - and to their evaluation.

Important steps are being taken to address human rights and humanitarian law violations, including women's human rights, and to end the culture of impunity. The International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are key precedents of action - both of their Statutes list rape as a crime against humanity. In addition, the ICTR listed rape as a war crime in internal armed conflict and its first decision was precedent-setting as it recognized rape as a tool of genocide. The International Criminal Court (ICC) will be a particularly important new tool for addressing abuses against women, having as it does a mandate to prosecute not only rape but also sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and persecution on the basis of gender. In addition, the Court's staff will include judges with expertise in violence against women. I am pleased to announce that Canadian legislation to allow for full implementation of the Rome Statute came into force yesterday. We urge others who have not done so to sign and ratify so that this new instrument can come into force as soon as possible.

The continuing work of civil society on the issue of women and peace and security deserves special attention. Yesterday, Mr. President, we benefitted from a very useful exchange of ideas with leading women's organizations. The Council should continue to collaborate with such organizations whose work on the ground contributes directly to protecting women, promoting their human rights and providing for their active participation in peace processes.

Any attempt to rebuild democracy in the wake of violent conflict must include gender considerations. Women's full and free participation at all levels, in all phases, from relief to development, must be promoted. Without it, the long-term sustainability of peace settlements will suffer because vital voices will not have been heard, and opportunities for the constructive participation of women will have been lost. In Burundi, for example, Canada financed the participation of women in the early stages of the peace process. We warmly welcomed UNIFEM's efforts, at a later date, to sustain their participation in spite of resistance to it. While this was an improvement, it was not nearly enough. Women's participation is vital at the pre-negotiation, negotiation and implementation phases. Let us heed the request of Burundian women that they be fully involved in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, at all levels, in all post-conflict institutions.

Canada believes that gender perspectives should be integral elements of the Security Council's work, including in the future reporting to the Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. As we proceed with the implementation of the Brahimi report on United Nations Peace Operations, we should also ensure that gender perspectives are fully integrated. In addition, Canada is pleased the DPKO Lessons Learned Unit has completed its report on gender and peacekeeping. We strongly encourage the Security Council to consider it and we note in particular the recommendations on monitoring, evaluation and accountability. The responsibility for gender equality lies with all bodies of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The issue of women and peace and security needs the sustained attention of the Security Council. The Council has both the authority and the instruments to make a difference. Other interlocutors within and outside the UN system will be vital to this endeavour and must be engaged. Canada is committed to working with others to advance this agenda.

Thank you, Mr. President.