

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Grant, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

I would like to thank the delegation of Azerbaijan for convening today's important debate. Canada welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Security Council's open debate on the role of women in international peace and security. Canada also welcomes the participation for the first time of Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in her important new role as Executive Director of UN Women.

(spoke in French)

Canada firmly believes that the participation of women in all decision-making processes, particularly those related to the prevention and resolution of conflict and the transition to democracy, is a necessary precondition to securing sustainable peace, as is their access to justice and their inclusion in the economic and social lives of their countries and communities. As the Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, said in his address to the General Assembly last month:

“We must invest in opportunities for women and young girls. We must ensure that women participate fully in all parts of our society and in all the countries of the United Nations. That will help us build a stronger, more secure, more prosperous and more peaceful world” (*A/68/PV.21, p. 2*)

(spoke in English)

Particularly egregious is the practice of child, early and forced marriage, which puts the very lives of young girls at risk. That practice denies girls' rights, disrupts their access to education, severely jeopardizes their health and limits the development of their community as a whole. Conflict situations exacerbate that practice among displaced and refugee populations, such as we know to be the case in Syria. Canada encourages the Security Council to continue to provide political leadership and to take action to ensure the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution processes.

Much work is being done by Member States, including by Canada, to advance the empowerment of women and girls. For example, Canada played an active role in the development of resolution 24/23, addressing child, early and forced marriage at the twenty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, and co-hosted a side event at the General Assembly in September. Canada is leading the first stand-alone draft resolution on the important issue at the General Assembly later this year.

Prime Minister Harper and other leaders in New York recently reviewed progress on the 2010 Muskoka summit of the Group of Eight and the United Nations initiatives to improve to improve global maternal and child health. Under Canada's leadership, the Human Rights Council adopted the robust resolution 23/25 this past June on the elimination of violence against women. The resolution lays out actions to be undertaken by Member States and the United Nations to prevent sexual violence, including in conflict-related situations, and calls on States to ensure that women are active participants in decision-making processes.

Canada joined 112 other Member States in September in launching the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Endorsements of the Declaration have now grown to an impressive 134 States. Canada and others are working with partners in the field to assist in the empowerment of women in conflict-related situations, to prevent and respond to sexual violence and to hold perpetrators to account. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Canada assists survivors of sexual violence in bringing those responsible to justice.

Canada looks forward to working with others to strengthen our collective efforts to empower women and girls as active decision-makers. We look forward to the Security Council high-level review in 2015 to assess what progress we are making in enhancing the role of women in international peace and security.

