

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China to the United Nations

I wish to thank Ms. Rice, Secretary of State of the United States of America, for having come to New York to preside over today's meeting. I am participating in this discussion on behalf of Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs. At the outset, please allow me to convey to Ms. Rice the Minister's cordial greetings. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Mr. Kerim, President of the General Assembly, for their statements.

Nearly eight years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), which constitutes a basis for cooperation among all the parties concerned in the area of women and peace and security. However, given the changing features of conflicts and the various complex and cross-cutting factors involved, the resolution has yet to be implemented fully. In the many conflicts under way today, women continue to be the most direct victims, and violence against women remains an extremely grave concern.

China condemns all violence against women, including acts of sexual violence, and urges all parties involved in conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law. We call upon the Governments concerned to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for crimes against women. China urges all countries that have not done so to take measures aimed at an early accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We support the Secretary-General in his pursuit of the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation committed by peacekeepers, and we hope that the troop-contributing countries will step up the training and monitoring of their peacekeepers, so that the relevant United Nations code of conduct can be complied with and implemented.

On this occasion, I wish to emphasize the following points in relation to the protection of women in armed conflict.

First, while the Security Council has a unique role to play in response to violence against women, United Nations organs and agencies should strengthen their coordination and cooperation. The issue of sexual violence in conflict is closely related to that of armed conflict itself. As the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council should focus its efforts on the prevention of conflict, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. Sexual violence should be addressed through a comprehensive approach in the context of the peace process and the political situation. It should not be treated as a stand-alone issue; nor should attention be given to its symptoms only. In addition, the Security Council should enhance its consultation with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat and the relevant treaty bodies in a joint effort to address violence against women.

Secondly, national Governments bear primary responsibility for the protection of women. The international community should provide substantial support and assistance. The responsibility for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and for the protection of women lies first and foremost with the Governments concerned. However, countries in conflict and those emerging from conflict are often beset with difficulties and thus require generous contributions from the international community to help them build their capacity. Meanwhile, external assistance should be provided in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations, respecting the will of the country in question and avoiding any undermining of its sovereignty.

Thirdly, the participation of women in every stage of the peace process should be enhanced. Their status and role should receive greater attention. Respecting and protecting women is the hallmark of a civilized society and of social progress. It is also an important element of a mature social system. Respect for and protection of women's rights should be mainstreamed throughout the peace process. Their special needs and concerns should be accommodated. Women should be further empowered to participate and to make decisions that concern them. In recent years, we have witnessed a great number of positive measures taken by the Secretariat to increase the ratio of women in senior positions, at the head of peacekeeping missions and in the staff in general. More efforts are needed in this direction in the future.

Fourthly, civil society should continue to be encouraged to join the efforts to protect women. Many of our colleagues in the non-governmental organization (NGO) community deserve our appreciation for the work they have carried out in the field to protect the rights and interests of women under difficult circumstances. China supports the constructive role that NGOs continue to play in the protection of women in armed conflict and encourages them to increase their communication with United Nations agencies, especially those with a special mandate on women's issues, and to offer proposals in this area.

We are pleased to note that, under the personal guidance of Secretary of State Rice, the United States delegation has submitted a draft resolution under this agenda item on elimination of all forms of sexual violence. China supports its adoption. The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on its implementation before 30 June 2009.

I would like to point out that, a few months ago, at its sixty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/134 on the same issue. In that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the resolution's implementation at the sixty-third session. To save resources and avoid duplication of labour, we hope the Secretary-General will strengthen coordination and make good use of all the information available so as to submit high-quality reports to both the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) reaffirms that the progress for women is progress for all. The same is true in the field of peace and security. The comprehensive implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) would be an important guarantee for achieving this target. We support the Secretary-General in his continued efforts to implement the System-wide Action Plan. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the protection of the rights and interests of women and to the advancement of women. We are ready to work with the rest of the international community in a joint effort to reduce sexual violence in every corner of the world and achieve all targets related to the issue of women and peace and security.