

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, November 30th 2012,
Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Osorio, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations.

I would like to express my thanks for the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2012/732) and for the briefings by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of UN-Women, Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, and Ms. Bineta Diop, who spoke on behalf of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

This is a good opportunity to consider the work being done by UN-Women, which as part of the General Assembly's strategy has integrated the international community's goals relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is also a good opportunity to give special recognition to the enormous and dedicated work being done by Madame Bachelet, her team and all who collaborate with her to consolidate the agency as an institution and to raise universal awareness of the principles behind the mission of UN-Women.

Colombia has benefited from United Nations technical and financial assistance to ensure the introduction of a gender approach into its national policies and laws. We are firmly committed to implementing resolution 1325 (2000), specifically by gradually increasing women's representation in decision-making, supporting their peace initiatives, strengthening their access to justice, empowering them economically, creating jobs and identifying their needs. Our purpose is to ensure the effective enjoyment of women's rights in terms of equality and non-discrimination, through positive actions with a calibrated approach and through laws, taking into account the importance of giving special attention and protection to those affected by such events as armed conflict and displacement.

With regard to the body of the Secretary-General's report, our attention is particularly drawn to the prominent role assigned to the culture of preventing situations negatively affecting women, with special emphasis on conflict situations, through mechanisms such as early warnings, cooperation, constructive dialogue and effective support for them in the public decision-making arena. Also important are the considerations concerning the importance of including a differentiated approach in mechanisms for protecting women, in accordance with their special characteristics, and the full reinstatement of their rights and economic empowerment.

States should be aware of the challenge posed by the integrated implementation of a broad legislative framework and protection initiatives geared towards women and girls, as well as the difficulties involved in prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of crimes affecting women and girls, particularly sexual violence and related crimes. Prevention strategies aimed at eradicating all forms of violence against women and the special protection that should be provided to the victims of this scourge are of fundamental importance.

In Colombia's case, we should highlight the adoption of policies intended to include women, eliminating discrimination and promoting women's economic, political and social empowerment, and their more active participation in development, both in decision-making and in the benefits derived from it. We emphasize successful initiatives such as the forming of women's community councils, regional workshops for indigenous women, and local boards. Such instruments seek to strengthen women's links to public policies and to maintain an ongoing dialogue with institutional sectors and social organizations.

To that end, on 13 September, the Government of Colombia launched its national public policy on gender equality for women and the integrated plan for a violence-free life, a national event at which, moreover, Madame Bachelet was present, at the side of our President and his Cabinet. Through such means we intend to strengthen State action aimed at women's equality and empowerment and to combat the scourge of violence against women in Colombia. My country has also joined the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, coordinated by UN-Women.

With reference to Ms. Diop's mention of Colombia, I should state that we have welcomed the creation of a chapter of Women for Peace and its noble goal of contributing to the process currently under way. Regarding another reference to women's participation in the peace processes, I have just seen a photograph on the BBC showing, among the negotiators, a woman at the side of a man, both part of the guerrilla group's negotiating team. There are women in the Colombian Government's delegation as well. In fact, among the signatures on the document launching the negotiation agreements, there are those of women on both sides. There are women in the support groups as well. I can thus assure the Council that they will have a very important voice throughout the peace process in my country.

Concerning the indicators adopted to evaluate progress in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on the same subject, these have the potential to become an important tool for designing mechanisms for preventing harmful acts against women and girls and for strengthening the protection of victims. We believe it is important to emphasize that such indicators should also be used in strict conformity with the mandate as laid out by the various resolutions. Maximum use should be made of the United Nations reports and special political missions as references for evaluating prevention. However, it is not helpful to take those findings out of context when they have already been discussed with States and do not contain new information regarding the indicators.

In any case, what is highlighted are assessments based on aspects particular to the internal functions of the United Nations, such as the percentage of instances of wrongful conduct by members of peacekeeping missions, the proportion of women in high-level positions in field missions, the percentage of field missions with gender experts, the degree to which measures to protect the human rights of women and girls are included in directives issued by peacekeeping missions, and the proportion of United Nations financing used to tackle gender-equality issues.

To deal with that assessment, States will have to include in their reports updated figures on the numbers and percentages of women's participation in their Government bodies and parliaments, as well as the percentage of temporary employment benefits received by women in the context of early economic recovery programmes.

It should be recognized that the primary responsibility for protecting women in matters related to peace and security belongs to States. Thus multilateral bodies and reports submitted should focus on coordinating procedures that facilitate performances, help to reduce duplication of efforts and build a coherent focus on the ground. The approaches should not concentrate exclusively on mechanisms designed to identify problems of human rights, since they do not contribute to lasting solutions. What makes a genuine contribution to reaching effective solutions is mechanisms geared to cooperation, constructive dialogue and effective support to countries.