

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

Statement by Mr. Hervé Ladsous, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to the United Nations.

I would join the Deputy Secretary-General and Michele Bachelet in thanking the presidency of the Council for having invited me to discuss the critical issue of women and peace and security.

Last month, in its presidential statement S/PRST/2012/23, the Security Council underlined the importance of enhancing the participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peacebuilding within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. Today, I would like to affirm, from the extensive field experience of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, that women indeed can and must play a leading role in political participation, conflict resolution and the transition from conflict to peace. I will further illustrate how our missions support the role of women in building peace and women's civil society organizations in protecting women's rights. And lastly, I hope to chart a path forward for overcoming the political obstacles and security threats that impede women's groups from more effective engagement in conflict prevention and peace consolidation.

I am grateful to the Security Council for welcoming the contribution of gender advisers and women protection advisers to the implementation of resolutions on women and peace and security. I wish to express my commitment to ensuring that gains made in the protection and promotion of women's and girls' rights and empowerment remain sustained, including during United Nations mission drawdowns and transitions.

This year, peacekeeping missions have supported important progress in some areas, notably women's political participation at the local and national levels. Experience also showed that in other areas — including the protection of women activists — more could be achieved. Women continue, unfortunately, to be largely absent from or to play merely symbolic roles in formal peace processes. Social and cultural norms certainly pose serious challenges to the full and meaningful participation of women in peace processes. In addition, women are frequently exposed to gender-based violence and have limited access to decision-making.

Regarding political participation, I have seen our missions work with women's organizations to bring women into State political institutions, to strengthen advocacy efforts, and to form strong, effective networks for peacebuilding, conflict resolution and leadership skills development. We have seen, for example, that women can successfully resolve conflicts relating to land ownership, water and cattle raiding by establishing dialogues with other women's groups from across border lines. In South Sudan, the women's community dialogue forum in the state of Central Equatoria has held meetings with community's leaders to discuss the issues affecting women and children who had been displaced after the conflicts between the Mundari and Bari communities. Two women who were involved in the community dialogue forum were nominated to the state legislative assembly.

In situations where, strictly speaking, there is no armed conflict, it is even more appropriate for women's organizations and civil society to play a part in preventing and settling political and social tensions. At present in Haiti, women account for fewer than 4 per cent of members elected to the national Parliament, and it must be acknowledged that most have been excluded from the reconstruction process. By comparison, in September this year women accounted for 19.5 per

cent of parliamentarians in the Caribbean and for 20.5 per cent worldwide. It is true that the Haitian Constitution has been amended to include a 30 per cent quota for women, but that special measure has yet to be implemented. While it could be an encouraging sign of greater participation of women in political life, representatives of women's organizations in Haiti appealed to the President of the Republic to find solutions to the problem of appointing members of the Cabinet and Permanent Electoral Council.

We need to do more to help States develop constitutional reforms that include a gender-specific perspective and take into account issues related to gender-based violence. We must also support the security sector and institutions for the rule of law, both for professionals and for those who will be held accountable. That can lead to the training of specialized police force members and greater capacities for judges and prosecutors in order to ensure a higher profile for prosecutions in cases of sexual violence. We must also strengthen networks for support to those who have survived gender-based violence so that they can once again take an active part in public life. Finally, we need to work together to a greater extent with UN-Women and our partners in country teams to help States to develop national action plans for implementing resolutions on women and peace and security.

We are moving forward in the right direction and I believe that we have made significant progress. For example, in 2011, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) trained 380 members of the armed forces, 280 of whom were women. It also trained 767 police officers, more than a third of whom were women, in the prevention of gender-based violence and in the search for appropriate solutions. MONUSCO also provided training on the gender-based analysis of conflict for members of the Commission on the Resolution and Prevention of Conflicts in Goma. That training made it possible to develop the capacity of the Commission to respond to the serious problems stemming from movements of women and girls in conflict areas, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Through outreach to Governments, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General can help provide a link between State-led mechanisms and women's groups to ensure that women's priorities are on the agenda. We need more initiatives like that of Darfur, where the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur has been able to support the establishment of the Darfur Regional Women's Legislative Caucus, State committees on resolution 1325 (2000) and a high-level State committee on combating violence against women.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, approximately 5,000 women of all political tendencies, including from civil society, flooded Kinshasa's main commercial avenue a week ago to protest the fall of Goma to rebels from the Mouvement du 23 mars. That was the most massively organized non-violent protest in the country following the fall of that city. The women protesters were received by MONUSCO's senior management. However, women have not been given any political leverage in the regional negotiations aimed at bringing peace to the embattled eastern part of the country pursuant to the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) that demand that women be a core part of all peacebuilding processes and related agreements.

Additionally, when supporting women's organizations, we must mobilize all members of the country team to serve as consultative partners for civil society. That gives women's groups confidence to act with the assurance that they may turn to the United Nations family if they perceive a threat. The country team also supports women's organizations with funding, information-sharing and capacity-building activities. For instance, women's groups convened

by DPKO and UN-Women at the Open Day in Timor-Leste in 2011 called upon country team members to help sustain the participation of women in community-level mediation and peacebuilding activities. As a result, the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Social Solidarity implemented a project that helped establish a Department of Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion within the Ministry of Solidarity. That department specifically includes women at the community level in local conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Another positive example is the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan and five women's non-governmental organizations on the implementation of the Women's Police Mentoring Programme, which aims to build the capacity of policewomen and to address the issue of abuse.

Finally, I would emphasize that the critical key to removing the obstacles that impede women's full participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is active and systematic consultation with local actors and leaders, including women's civil society organizations. That is the only way to develop effective, contextspecific and gender-aware solutions.

Last month, DPKO and DFS participated in a dialogue with women peacemakers from all over the world who had gathered at the University of San Diego. The women peacemakers recommended that the United Nations formalize and systematize consultations with women in every step of the United Nations peacekeeping process, from pre-assessment to deployment of a mission, to evaluation of a mission, to the renewal of a mandate, and to the change of a mandate to transition to peacebuilding.

Together with our partner, UN-Women, we call on Member States to enhance women's participation and protection by supporting and strengthening their commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As Michelle Bachelet has said, together we must go the extra mile.

Once again, Mr. President, I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council.