

(UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION)

Security Council Public Debate on the Implementation of Resolution 1325

“Women, Peace and Security”

New York, 29 October 2004

I am happy, Mr. President, that you have taken the initiative of holding this public debate on women, peace and security, and centering it on the issue of the violence women are subjected to in armed conflicts.

France fully supports the declaration that will be pronounced shortly by the Dutch Presidency of the European Union.

Before I speak about violence against women, I want to say once again that resolution 1325 is a major point of reference for my country, for the efforts of the Security Council and for the entire United Nations system. We thank the Secretary General for his report, whose analysis and recommendations we fully support.

The presidential declaration we are adopting today is an opportunity to give new political and operational momentum to the implementation of resolution 1325, and we want to thank the United Kingdom for taking the initiative. I also want to congratulate Jean-Marie Guéhenno, and through him the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, for the extent of the efforts accomplished in two years.

We remain aware that there is still much to do in order to fully achieve the provisions of resolution 1325. The Council all too often neglects this aspect of conflict prevention and resolution. I want to stress three points:

1. The quality of thematic and country reports presented to the Council: We must ensure that neither written nor oral reports are silent on this issue. As technical constraints limit the volume of gender-specific information in the reports, the Council could obtain more detailed information in a form that remains to be defined. We would be happy to meet periodically with council members in charge of parity issues in an appropriate format.
2. The gender-specific content of mandates: France has mobilized to ensure that PKO mandates systematically comprise a gender-specific dimension and explicitly refer to resolution 1325. The UNOCI and ONUB mandates, to mention just two for which my country recently took the initiative, contain numerous references to the situation and to the action of women in those countries. In the resolution that France presented on children in armed conflicts, we took care to specifically address the question of girl soldiers, all too often absent from DDDR programs. Last year, I pledged before you to do this. We will not stop our efforts.
3. Council missions on the ground: I also pledge that the next Security Council mission to the Great Lakes region, which France is preparing, will provide contacts with women's associations, as was the case last year in Bunia and Bujumbura. The Council Mission must also examine how, on this point, UN operations are fulfilling their mandate and succeed in working at both the national and regional scale.

Mr. President,

I listened very attentively to the speeches by Ms. Arbour and Ms. Obaid on sexual violence against women in conflict situations. We were also struck by what the NGOs told us during the Security Council's "Arria"-format meeting last week.

Violence against women is deeply repugnant. During the past three months, the Council's attention was particularly drawn to this issue by alarming reports; I'm thinking in particular of Ituri, Burundi, and of course Darfur. We were shocked by the information exposing the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war. How can we hope to rebuild a society when women must deal with such trauma? When the victims don't dare complain or seek care for fear of experiencing further humiliation, or out of discouragement before the denial of justice inflicted on them on top of everything else?

How can we avoid such tragedies? I see three areas in which we can take action:

First, we no doubt don't pay enough attention to the warning signs of sexual violence. The Secretary General is perfectly right to point out our collective failure to prevent such violence.

I fully support UNIFEM's current initiative to develop alert signals. It is their use that is essential. I am convinced that a society that relaxes its vigilance or ignores violence against women in peacetime is exposing itself to the worst abuses during periods of crisis. In this area, the principle of zero tolerance must prevail at all times.

We must redouble our efforts to better measure the scope and nature of such violence. That is why France made a €100,000 contribution, for 2004, to the study of all forms of violence against women, as the General Assembly asked of the Secretary General for its 60th session in 2005.

Second, when we receive troubling information, we must respond more effectively. This means swiftly deploying human rights monitors capable not only of reporting on the violence but also providing technical assistance to local authorities to put an end to such abuses. France welcomes Ms. Arbour's announcement, in this regard, that a rapid reaction team will soon be established in Geneva.

It is also essential that these crimes be brought to the Council's attention, so that it may act in consequence. In this regard, we believe that hearings by the Council of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are extremely valuable.

Third and finally, we must ensure that the guilty are punished and that victims obtain protection and reparations.

This presumes strengthening the means at every level: justice and interior ministers, prisons, prosecutors, judges, attorneys, legal assistance, the psychological and medical care of victims. The recent UNIFEM conference on the topic "peace needs women and women need justice" clearly laid out this entire problem.

But the example must come from the United Nations. The UN must provide assistance to national jurisdictions whenever it is possible and desirable. Beyond that, the tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda were pioneers in their jurisprudence on sexual crimes, even though those investigations did not always deal with this aspect sufficiently. I also welcome the increased number of female judges within the ICTR and the special court in Sierra Leone.

Finally, there is obviously the International Criminal Court. The Statute of Rome, with its dual preventive and punitive dimension, has a key role to play in responding to violence against women. It is innovative in its acknowledgement, for the first time, that certain acts of sexual violence are among the most odious acts sanctioned by international law. The International Criminal Court's recent decisions to open investigations into crimes under its jurisdiction committed in DRC and Uganda are clearly major developments in the fight against impunity in those countries.

I don't want to end without paying tribute to the tireless and precious efforts of civil society to promote the implementation of resolution 1325. I am pleased that one of its representatives was invited to contribute to our debate. I invite the NGOs to continue to spur on the Council so that its actions may be inspired even further by resolution 1325.

Thank you.