

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Messone, Representative of Gabon

Madam President, my delegation welcomes your presiding over our work as the Security Council holds its annual thematic debate on women and peace and security. We commend your initiative in organizing it.

We thank the Secretary-General, UnderSecretary-General Bachelet, Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe of the Economic and Social Council, and Ms. Nemat for their briefings. We welcome the presence of Ms. Chowdhary, of the Parliament of India.

As members know, two years ago Gabon underwent a political transition that was outstandingly led by two women, one the President of the Senate and the other the President of the Constitutional Court. When Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, addressed the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, he recalled the high priority Gabon gives to the effective participation of women in mediation and conflict prevention (see A/66/PV.16).

A few weeks ago, we welcomed the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to three women: Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, Ms. Leymah Gbowee, Liberian activist, and Ms. Tawakkul Karman, Yemeni activist. This year, those three women clearly embody the very issue we are discussing.

The Security Council reached a consensus more than a decade ago in recognizing, through the adoption on 31 October 2000 of resolution 1325 (2000), the decisive role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. In its presidential statement S/PRST/2001/31, the Council made commitments on this issue. In doing so, it established that without the effective participation of women in peace processes, our efforts to maintain international peace and security would always be incomplete and would yield diminished results.

In the matter under discussion, three areas seem to us essential for coherent and fruitful action. First, we must strengthen our normative framework at the international, regional and national levels. Secondly, we must work to strengthen capacities, especially through peacekeeping missions and in the post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction phase. Finally, we must establish a stronger link between the protection of women and children and the prevention of armed conflict by focusing on the root causes of those conflicts.

We note that much progress has been made in developing a normative framework to strengthen the action of the international community. Resolution 1325 (2000) is the foundation of that structure. That foundation has expanded and now forms a body with resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010). Together, those resolutions offer the Council and the international community as a whole a vast body of values and principles that can guide our action in matters of participation, protection, capacity building and the fight against impunity, but also in the rehabilitation and reintegration of women in society in the context of peacebuilding.

We welcome the fact that a majority of Security Council resolutions focus particular attention on the question of women's effective participation. That fortunate trend should be pursued so that it becomes an essential part of the work of the Council and of the United Nations.

In light of the persistent realities in conflict situations, especially the continuing violence against women, we need a renewed commitment on the part of all actors, first and foremost States, but also regional governmental institutions and civil society organizations. We must be more vigilant about putting into practice the relevant recommendations in the Council resolutions. We must also be more mindful of the Secretary-General's recommendations aimed at greater integration of women in prevention, mediation and peacebuilding in post-conflict situations.

The obstacles to women taking a broader role are often cultural in nature. We believe that this aspect can be addressed in the Secretary-General's report devoted to the high-level meeting scheduled for 2015. We also encourage UN-Women to work more on overcoming cultural obstacles that can hinder peacebuilding. Greater action by UN-Women, particularly in Africa, can be decisive. From that point of view, a crucial task is finalizing work on the indicators likely to allow us to assess progress but also, above all, measure the impediments to our action. We would like to welcome here the efforts made by the Secretary-General to increase the number of women who hold positions of senior responsibility in coordinating the Organization's efforts to promote peace and security, both at the Secretariat and in peacekeeping missions.

An important aspect of our debate is the link between preventive diplomacy and the Council's initiatives to promote the role of women in peace processes. More than 10 years of continued efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) have revealed the limits of a reactive approach. Gabon supports a more comprehensive approach aimed at incorporating conflict prevention as a fundamental part of an effective strategy to protect women and young girls from the agony of conflict and war. Through such a strategy, women would have leading roles, which of course entails women playing a part in the policy sphere in peacetime so that they can be fully involved in the different stages of mediation and political negotiation in times of crisis. In this regard, regional and sub-regional organizations, namely African organizations, should also adopt such a strategy. The African Union's incorporation of gender parity in the highest positions of its hierarchy is a strong indication of a move in that direction.

I would like to conclude by stressing that promoting more effective political participation by women at the level of the African continent to make them effective agents in prevention and peacebuilding efforts requires a greater contribution from all regional, multilateral and even bilateral players. Setting up programmes devoted to capacity-building for women and young girls, including those aimed at their socioeconomic empowerment, are crucial, especially in the reconstruction and peacebuilding phase. We also believe that the various entities of the United Nations system and regional and international financial institutions, including the World Bank, must also play a dominant role in this area.

We would like to express our full support for the draft presidential statement that will be adopted at the end of our debate.