

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security**  
**Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)**

*Statement by H.E. Ms. Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie, Minister of Tourism and Culture of the Gambia, to the United Nations*

I am deeply honoured and humbled to address the Security Council on the issue of women and peace and security, and resolution 1325 (2000), on behalf of the Vice-President and Minister of Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy.

First and foremost, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his explicit report and the practical recommendations therein on resolution 1325 (2000) (S/2010/498). We also align ourselves with the statement that will be delivered on behalf of the Group of African States.

Allow me at this juncture to recognize and acknowledge the United Nations for taking bold steps towards the reforms that gave birth to the new entity, UN Women, inter alia, holistically providing for improved collaboration and greater efficiency in order to achieve a speedy and positive impact. In that regard, we join other Member States in congratulating and applauding the appointment of the dynamic lady sitting next to me right now as head of UN Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet. We have no doubt that her level of experience and dynamism will help to usher in a new impetus, enhancing existing efforts of the United Nations to promote gender equality, increase opportunity for women and girls and tackle discrimination and gender-based violence around the world. Those efforts are being made in tandem with commitments that were made at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (see A/S-23/10/Rev.1), in particular the commitments concerning women and armed conflict.

The Government of the Gambia, having recognized the prevailing poor indicators for the social, economic and health status of women and girls in developing countries, has joined the rest of the international community as signatory to several relevant treaties and resolutions, including the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, the 2006 Maputo Plan of Action, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, as well as Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

The various Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security allude to the necessity of ensuring the active participation of women in peace processes, particularly in conflict prevention and the protection of women from gender-based violence and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, as well as the promotion of women's and girls' rights during and after conflicts and in post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction. Furthermore, resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009) also call for the elevation of women to leadership positions, while resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) emphasize the importance of prevention and protection from sexual violence as a weapon of war.

As it seeks to fulfil the vital commitments contained in these resolutions, the Government of the Gambia, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, has embarked on a series of actions and has been guided by the slogan "From commitment to action". Key among these actions are the following.

First, the Gambia is actively participating in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and peacebuilding in affected countries in our subregion and beyond. The Gambia has also maintained a central role in peacekeeping missions at the subregional, regional and international levels, and more than ever before, the outstanding performance of our female contingent has been widely recognized and applauded by recipient countries.

Secondly, the Gambia has adopted, ratified and enacted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Trafficking in Persons Act in 2007, the Children's Act in 2005 and the Women's Act in 2010.

Thirdly, the Gambia's validated Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020 has been submitted to the Cabinet for approval before submission to the National Assembly — our Parliament — for enactment. Fourthly, in line with relevant provisions contained in Chapter IV, Section 3, of the Gambia's Constitution of

1997, women have been proactively involved in all spheres of national development, both from the peaceful transition to the second Republic and to date. The Gambia has the longest serving woman Vice-President in Africa. Women have assumed key ministerial posts in such areas as finance, justice, education, health, tourism and culture — which is my Ministry — and energy. The Speaker of our National Assembly is also a woman.

Suffice it to mention that the Gambia, popularly known as the smiling coast of Africa, has — knock on wood — enjoyed relative peace and stability since independence in 1965. As a result, it has served as a safe haven to brothers and sisters from the subregion fleeing from conflict. The Government of the Gambia, together with its partners in its proactive efforts to build the capacity of women, continues to sponsor women counsellors from the National Women's Council, the advisory organ of the Government on women's issues, to attend international meetings on gender and women's affairs, including on resolution 1325 (2000), in order to broaden their knowledge base.

It is worth mentioning, however, that no country is immune to threats to absolute peace and that no country is an island. In that regard, the Gambia continues to use various traditional mechanisms, such as the Council of Elders and religious and community organizations, to enhance peace and participation, prevent conflicts, support refugees, and continue to promote and nurture peace and stability.

We are happy to inform the Council that the Gambia is in the process of finalizing its national action plan and is grateful to both the Economic Community of West African States Gender Development Centre and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women for their support in that regard. We call on other organizations, in particular other United Nations agencies, to partner with us in our efforts to realize the implementation of landmark resolution 1325 (2000).

In conclusion, allow me to mention some challenges that we expect to encounter on our way forward. There is still a low level of awareness at all levels of the existence and content of resolution 1325 (2000), which explains why the Gambia has yet to attain a 50 per cent involvement of women in peacebuilding and negotiation processes undertaken pursuant to the resolution.

Secondly, as women attempt to take on new political roles, they continue to be challenged by traditional beliefs and values, certain sociocultural factors and misguided religious interpretations. They are further constrained by the limited nature of their skills as they try to influence peacebuilding processes in an effective manner, and sometimes they feel threatened, reluctant to participate, especially if they were victims of sexual violence.

But there is a way forward. National Governments, as far as the Gambia is concerned, must sustain the political will and momentum now being given to women's empowerment and must satisfy the need to establish gender-responsive budgeting, where it is nonexistent, or strengthen it, where it does exist. Governments must strengthen donor coordination in order to enhance funding for the implementation of the action plan under resolution 1325 (2000). All Member States are urged to conduct aggressive campaigns to raise awareness at all levels on the content and meaning of resolution 1325 (2000) and associated resolutions.

Because setting indicators is crucial to monitor progress and aid reporting, Member States should receive assistance in the country assessments or situational analyses they are conducting to obtain baseline information with a view to developing, inter alia, evidence-based policies, planning and target setting. Standardized and functional coordination mechanisms need also to be put in place, and common strategies and indicators to facilitate subregional collaboration and reporting on progress are also crucial.