

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict- Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Makharoblishvili, Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations

First of all, Georgia fully associates itself with the statement made by the observer of European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to add some comments in my national capacity and contribute to these fruitful discussions by sharing our country's experience in assisting women to promote their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Government of Georgia is strongly committed to the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Therefore, ensuring women's liberties represents one of our priorities. The Government seeks to strengthen United Nations coordination mechanisms to ensure our fruitful engagement in overcoming existing challenges.

At the international level, the Government of Georgia fully supports the ongoing efforts of the international community to promote the role of women in different spheres. Georgia has become a sponsor of the relevant resolutions presented within the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

As the Council is aware, in 1994 Georgia joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without any reservations. Apart from that, Georgia has acceded to multilateral treaties, among them the 1951 Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

To address the rights of women, Georgia has dynamically carried out complex measures in various areas, including legislation and relevant actions as well as implementing all initiatives with the active participation of civil society.

On 27 December 2011, the Parliament of Georgia approved the 2012-2015 Georgia national action plan on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security — with important technical assistance from UN Women. The national action plan is built on four pillars: increasing the participation of women in peace processes and the security sector; preventing all forms of violence against women; protecting women against all kinds of threats and safeguarding their physical, mental and economic security; and addressing the specific needs of women during and after conflict periods. The national action plan is the first such initiative in the South Caucasus region to ensure the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In total, numerous consultative meetings were held, involving approximately 102 organizations — representing internally displaced persons and conflict-affected women — in the preparation process of the national action plan. That dialogue is continuing to date in the context of the plan's implementation phase.

While discussing the successful developments in advancing women's rights and freedoms, I would like to emphasize the fruitful cooperation that the Government enjoys with UN Women. We appreciate its support in facilitating consultations and information-sharing meetings among representatives of Georgian women's non-governmental organizations and women participants of the Geneva international discussions. The purpose of the meetings was to inform civil society actors, especially women's organizations, on frameworks of peace processes aimed at increasing knowledge and capacity towards advocating for the inclusion of gender-specific concerns related to conflict in the relevant forums.

Women's role in Georgia, including the political and military fields, has significantly grown. Women represent 5.4 per cent of the armed forces and 50 per cent of the civilian personnel of the Ministry of Defense, among whom 20 per cent hold decision-making positions. Women take part in the Georgian contingent of the

International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. This is the first year that female students have attended the main education programme of Georgia's national defence academy.

Regular training programmes are conducted to enhance the skills and capacities of women police officers. After the adoption of the national action plan, female police officers from various regions of Georgia participated in training programmes to enhance the skills and role of female officers, with the aim of becoming leaders and mentors in Georgian law enforcement. In addition, again in close collaboration with UN Women, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is piloting a specialized police unit to deal with gender based violence in several municipalities of the country.

In June 2013, the Georgia Parliament adopted amendments to the labour code to introduce regulations that are more liberal with respect to women's employment. Currently, Georgia's Ministry of Justice has also initiated the drafting of a non-discrimination law that will foresee the establishment of mechanisms to ensure the protection of citizens from all forms of discrimination, including those based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

While the Government of Georgia spares no effort in ensuring women's liberties in the country and to strengthen women's role in areas related to security and peacebuilding, we face major challenges in the occupied regions of Georgia. Concomitant to the installation of barbed wire fences along the occupation line of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, heavy restrictions on freedom of movement have been imposed, extending even to the most vulnerable populations, namely, those in need of urgent medical assistance, and expectant mothers. Unfortunately, such restrictions have even led to casualties, when three women died en route to hospital after having been refused passage through the occupation line.

Despite numerous calls by the international community, up to a half million internally displaced persons and refugees, among them several hundred thousand women, continue to be deprived of their fundamental right to a safe and dignified return. We remain hopeful that the international community will adequately react to the illegal activities in the occupied regions of Georgia and the ongoing violations of human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to, once again, reiterate the firm commitment of my Government to strengthening cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies in order to defend the interests of women who are suffering from gender bias, violence and other inhuman or degrading treatment.