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Statement

by

**H.E. Mr. Nirupam Sen
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on

Women and peace and security

at the

Security Council

New York

October 28, 2004

Mr. President,

We are pleased to see you chairing this meeting of the Security Council.

In an earlier intervention on women, peace and security, we had advised that the Council, in its examination of the issue, remain within the area of its mandate, namely the impact of conflict on women and the Council's role in its resolution. While we have been participating in the debates of the Council on this item, we continue to maintain that thematic issues, with a cross-cutting, multi-sectoral dimension requiring the active consideration of all Member States, are best discussed in a universal forum such as the General Assembly.

The report of the Secretary-General under consideration provides a comprehensive review of the progress achieved over the past four years in the implementation of Resolution 1325. The report shows that the initiative has led to some success in areas such as gender-mainstreaming in peace-keeping operations and training of peace-keepers on gender perspectives.

My country has been happy to contribute to this process. As one of the larger troop contributors to the United Nations, India has been conscious of the need to incorporate the essential elements of such a policy in the pre-deployment training that all its peace-keepers undergo before proceeding to mission areas. In response to the Secretary-General's concern, expressed in his report to the Special Committee on peace-keeping operations, about the low representation of women in peace-keeping operations, India has decided to deploy two women military observers to the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The Secretary-General has pointed out in his report, however, that the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls in armed conflict continue to pose a pressing challenge. The real test of the adequacy of these efforts is, doubtless, their impact on the ground. The post-Cold War era has been characterised by increasing intra-state conflicts, terrorist attacks, ethnic cleansing and egregious violations of human rights. All of these impact on the vulnerable sections of society, mainly women and children. The international community needs to mobilise itself to address these situations. We share the principles and objectives of the report. Our comments, therefore, are on certain matters of nuance and detail.

In our experience, some of the solutions offered by the Secretary-General, in particular, the greater participation of women in areas of conflict-prevention, peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, are germane to the issue. Some solutions would need to emerge from the conflict-ridden societies themselves. Others are more long-term and structural. They involve, *inter alia*, the encouragement of democratic ideals and practices, freedom of speech and expression, effecting improvements in economic and social conditions, and expansion of opportunities for education and productive employment.

Mr. President,

It was not for nothing that the poet Nekrassov, writing of the horrors of war, said that the "most sacred tears are the mother's"; mothers' organisations in several cases have moderated conflict and their strength and energy need to be specifically harnessed. In his report, the Secretary-General has reflected upon several salient issues with regard to implementation of Resolution 1325. He recognises the need to prioritise the pro-active role women can play in peace-building and the need to enhance women's participation at the peace table. We are in full agreement with the Secretary-General's observation that without the inclusive participation of women, peace-building cannot be comprehensive.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's identification of some key challenges faced in this regard, including increasing the number of women in high level decision-making positions - in peace-keeping operations, in peace negotiations, and similar activities. Addressing the issue of women's full participation in peace negotiations and peace-building is undoubtedly essential. However, attempts to artificially enhance the number of women in peace negotiations - especially in conflicts where societies are male-dominated - cannot necessarily guarantee enduring results. Equal participation has to be a local initiative, and any external attempt at influencing the situation otherwise has to be incremental for it to have lasting effect.

We agree with the Secretary-General's view that it is important for the United Nations and its agencies to achieve a higher level of representation of women, quantitatively and at senior levels. It may also be useful for the Secretary-General to consider making adequate provision of resources for training of women from developing countries, in order to give this meaning. While making provision for regular budgetary resources specifically allocated for both gender-

mainstreaming and initiatives targetted at women and girls, the need for specific allocation of resources for such training should be kept in mind.

Similarly, the question of bringing perpetrators of violence to justice merits careful consideration. We agree with the Secretary-General that the international community should send stronger signals to parties to conflict that gender-based violence will be investigated and perpetrators will be prosecuted. There should be zero tolerance for gender-based violence. However, external attempts at imposing justice can only lead to further strife, as we have heard repeatedly from countries that have emerged from conflict and are in the process of establishing rule-based systems. The international community needs to enhance cooperation for capacity-building in the areas of justice and the rule of law and in strengthening national justice systems to ensure that perpetrators of violence are brought to justice.

Like the Secretary-General, we too are convinced that sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are totally unacceptable forms of behaviour. We condemn such behaviour - whether by peace-keeping personnel or by humanitarian personnel - and believe that necessary measures providing protection against such exploitation and abuse must be undertaken. There is need for the most stringent regulations in dealing with such cases going even beyond the Secretary-General's bulletin. In this context, we are cognisant of the fact that many Member States have regulations more far-reaching than those contained in the bulletin and that powerful, committed and result-oriented women's organisations in many countries have achieved significant results.

The Secretary-General has urged Member States and entities of the UN to establish a coordinated humanitarian response monitoring system with specific indicators to determine attention to gender perspective at field level. He has also expressed his intention to set indicators and benchmarks for women's equal participation in all aspects of elections processes, based on a review of good practice. The development of indicators, benchmarks and guidelines is a sensitive and serious issue, which should involve a process of broader inter-governmental scrutiny and approval before their eventual adoption.

Thank you, Mr. President.
