

Security Council Open debate on women, peace and security – 5th October 2009

Statement by Ambassador Gian Lorenzo Cornado, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations,

Italy

Thank you, Mr. President.

I would like first of all to commend you for convening this important meeting on the implementation of Resolution 1325. Let me also thank the Deputy Secretary General, H.E. Ms. Migiro, Assistant Secretary General Ms. Mayanja, Executive Director Ms. Alberdi and Ms. Amin. Italy aligns itself with the position expressed by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. Mr. President, Tragically, sexual violence continues to be used with impunity as a weapon of war to destroy the very fabric of society in many conflicts in the world. This has to stop. As Secretary of State Clinton said in this Chamber just a few days ago, the dehumanizing nature of sexual violence erodes social and political stability, undermines economic progress, and holds us all back. Italy has committed itself to make this battle one of the top priorities of its international action. In the framework of the Italian Presidency of the G8, on 9-10 September my Government convened an international conference in Rome on the issue of violence against women. In the Presidency's Conclusions of that meeting, we clearly stated that, "violence against women and girls is a war crime and a crime against humanity." The participants committed, "To strive to ensure the fullest possible implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820, not least to eliminate the sense of impunity that is still widespread amongst the perpetrators of such crimes."

Mr. President,

The use of sexual violence as a war tactic is clearly a global emergency. In the last year and a half the Security Council has shown remarkable leadership in this field. With hindsight, we can say that the approval of Resolution 1820 was indeed a watershed. It clearly established that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict when used as a tactic of war is a matter of peace and security and very much the business of this Council. Italy is proud to have been one of the co-sponsors of this landmark Resolution and to have actively contributed to its drafting. Resolution 1820 brought about a better understanding of the implications of sexual violence as a weapon of war, thus opening the way for the Council to adopt two other important resolutions: Resolution 1882 and, only last week, Resolution 1888. Both provide the Council with important and effective new tools to end impunity and to hold accountable the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. It is now up to the Council to use these tools and implement these resolutions in full and without delay. We encourage the Working Group of the Security Council on children and armed conflict to use the full array of means at its disposal to deal with parties responsible for rape and sexual violence against children. We look forward to the Secretary-General's early appointment of a Special Representative for "women, peace and security" to provide much needed leadership, coordination and advocacy. We are also convinced of the importance of finding ways to ensure a better and more detailed reporting to the Council, primarily of the identity of the parties responsible for these grave violations.

Mr. President,

Women's security must be guaranteed. Abuses must be prosecuted. Blanket amnesties must be off the table. But the protection of women is just one pillar of Security Council Resolution 1325. Women are agents of change, fundamental players for peace, stabilization, reconstruction and sustainable development. This was one of the key messages of Resolution 1325. What we need now is to move with equal determination to achieve similar progress in empowering women and in ensuring their effective and equal participation in every phase of peace-making, conflict-prevention, peace processes, and peace-building. As the aforementioned Presidency Conclusions of the G8 Meeting in Rome state, "Global peace and security also depend on women's actions and on their participation, in conditions of equality, in social development and in governance mechanisms at local, national and world levels." The Resolution that the Council adopted today is a first important step in this direction, and we commend Viet Nam for taking this initiative. The role of women is particularly important to peace-building efforts, as recognized by the specific gender mandate of the Peace Building Commission. After a conflict, women are often victims of heinous abuses and irrationally stigmatized for the violence they have suffered. At the same time they are the pillars of families that need to be recomposed and of societies that need to be rebuilt; educators of future generations; partners in the reintegration of ex-combatants; mothers of fatherless children; the only dynamic economic actors in a ravaged society. For these reasons a peace that is built without considering the needs and hopes of women cannot be a lasting peace. As we have said time and time again, this is not just a question of how many women are included in a political or decision-making process. It is about enabling them to champion issues that are vital to their empowerment. This is only possible through the full engagement of civil society and women's organization. This is why their resource, training and capacity-building needs must always be given full consideration. The United Nations has an important contribution to make, to assure, for instance, that the participation of women is better reflected in peace-keeping mission mandates and to

provide these missions with much needed expertise and resources, also through the inclusion of a gender component in all its peace-keeping and political missions.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by reaffirming Italy's firm commitment to the full implementation of Resolution 1325 and to promoting women's participation and empowerment. We have made it a priority both for our political action and our development cooperation. To this end we have funded a number of UNIFEM projects focused on implementing Resolution 1325 in West Africa and we have started the process to draft a National Action Plan. As one of the main troop contributors of U.N. peacekeeping, we have an important role to play to ensure that 1325 is mainstreamed in all U.N. missions.

Thank you, Mr. President,