

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

Statement by H.E. Ms. Maria Rosaria Carfagna, Minister of Equal Opportunities of Italy to the United Nations

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union.

First, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on organizing this open debate of the Security Council on an issue of the utmost importance to the international community. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and all previous speakers for their insightful presentations. I take this opportunity to express Italy's strong support for Under-Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet as she undertakes her new, important endeavour.

The anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) provides a unique opportunity for Member States and the United Nations system to take concrete steps to enhance its implementation. In this regard, allow me to express my appreciation for the Council's decision to take forward the set of indicators developed by the Secretary-General to track the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We consider this to be a first step, and we now call on the Council to ensure the indicators' swift operationalization. In this spirit, I will focus my statement on one of the most effective tools for strengthening the resolution: the adoption of national action plans by Member States.

Let me start by reiterating Italy's full commitment to adopting a national action plan. An inter-ministerial committee of committed administrations and departments has been working on a draft action plan, which is now at an advanced stage, and I am pleased to announce that it is expected to be finalized and adopted by the end of this year.

One of the main objectives of the Italian action plan is to strengthen the participation of women in peacekeeping missions and their decision-making bodies. Italy has long honoured its pledge to avoid gender discrimination, enrolling women in all its national armed forces. This has resulted in an increase in the number of women in that field and in their participation at all levels and stages of peacekeeping operations. In 1999, a consultative committee of the Defence Chief of Staff and the Financial Police General Command on voluntary military service for women was set up to monitor the correct implementation of the law in this regard. According to the data provided by the committee, women have been recruited in all segments of the military. However, their presence is still sparse and almost non-existent in top positions. This is mainly due to the fact that Italy is new to the conscription of women, compared to other countries where female participation is a long-standing tradition and thus significantly higher.

Adopting a gender perspective for all peacebuilding activities is another essential priority of the action plan. In my capacity as Minister of Equal Opportunities, I can only stress the importance of adopting a gender-oriented approach to all peacebuilding operations, conducting gender-sensitive surveys, collecting statistics with gender-disaggregated data and carrying out specific studies on other discriminatory factors. Moreover, the plan focuses on the protection of human rights in post-conflict areas, particularly women's rights. The staff of peacekeeping missions should be trained to deal with these situations, where women are the most affected and most vulnerable. Specific training is required in the following areas: equal opportunities, international humanitarian law, resolution 1325 (2000) and human rights, with particular reference to issues relating to gender-based violence, sexual violence and human trafficking.

Another priority of the plan is cooperation with countries beset by conflict and with their institutional stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and civil society to enhance their invaluable work. One possible example of such cooperation would be opening ad hoc local facilities to accommodate and rehabilitate women who fall victim to violence and sexual abuse.

Lastly, the plan addresses the issue of providing women with greater opportunities to voice their views and show their capabilities. It seeks to strengthen their presence in post-conflict processes, where they are often at a disadvantage in competing for resources, such as access to microcredit.

These are the most significant elements of Italy's national action plan. We are convinced that it will enhance

our efforts to promote peace and strengthen human rights in conflict areas.