

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mr. Salam, Representative of Lebanon

At the outset, allow me to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this important and timely debate. Allow me also to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing, and Ms. Bachelet, Ambassador Kapambwe and Ms. Nemat for their presentations.

More than a decade has passed since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Throughout that period, the United Nations system, regional organizations, Member States and civil society have made significant efforts to adapt the resolution to local settings through a wide spectrum of measures and initiatives. Progress has been made in terms of discourse and evolving practice on the participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, and awareness has increased of the threat that sexual violence constitutes to peace and security.

Despite important national, regional and international efforts, however, the conditions that women and girls still face in situations of armed conflict continue to be abhorrent. The benefits of resolution 1325 (2000) have yet to reach most women in conflict and in fragile settings. In that regard, allow me to make the following comments.

First, we view the prevention of conflict as a crucial element of resolution 1325 (2000). That includes the prevention of all forms of conflict-related violence against women and girls. Sexual violence remains the least-condemned war crime in peace agreements and beyond. The elimination of impunity is perhaps the single most effective preventive tool to fight that crime. In that regard, reforming the security sector and ensuring respect for the rule of law in a gender-responsive manner is of crucial importance. Conflict and post-conflict societies should be assisted in those areas as early as possible. The preventive aspect of resolution 1325 (2000) also includes women's full and equal involvement in conflict prevention efforts. We concur with the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/598*) that more attention needs to be paid to women's roles in the field. We support his recommendation for the Council to use its deliberations on preventive diplomacy and mediation to consider means of enhancing the role of women in conflict prevention.

Secondly, the meaningful participation of women in decision-making forums, institutions and mechanisms related to conflict resolution and peacebuilding is essential, not only for peace but also for sustainable development and long-term security. Such participation should be treated as a requirement for building a solid and genuine democracy, which cannot be fully achieved unless the inequalities affecting half of the population are adequately addressed.

In that sense, the political participation of women and addressing their specific needs are not solely social issues, but also good governance issues. In particular, women's engagement in peace negotiations is essential to ensure that their rights and needs are taken into account in peace agreements and institutional arrangements. Peace accord provisions could have far reaching consequences on women's engagement in post-conflict governance and on their access to justice, reparations, resources and economic security.

International, regional and national actors should therefore spare no efforts to engage women and to ensure the inclusion of gender expertise in peace efforts. It is also essential that regular consultations between special envoys and mediators and women's civil society groups become standard operating procedure.

Partnerships with male community leaders and opinion-shapers could also play an important role in raising awareness of the benefits of women's participation and could help to implement gender related programming at the local level.

Thirdly, we would like to stress the importance of investing in youth, girls and boys alike, as an essential driving force behind meaningful peacebuilding efforts. Arab youth have lately become the symbol of an uprising in the name of freedom, dignity and participation. In their legitimate struggle for a better life, Arab youth groups have exhibited immense creativity. The ideals of young people are their most valuable resource for influencing the development of their societies and the shape of their future. This has been embodied by Ms. Tawakkul Karman, the first Arab woman to become a Nobel Prize laureate, along with two great women leaders from Liberia.

Finally, it is our collective and individual responsibility as Member States to adopt a determined and consistent approach that will lead to positive and concrete results in the lives of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. The framework and the tools are at hand; let us back them with the necessary political will.