

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

Statement by H.E. Ms. Vabab Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development of Liberia to the United Nations

Liberia is pleased to be participating in this open debate on women and peace and security. We commend the delegation of Uganda for convening this discussion in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the landmark United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) during its presidency of the Council.

We are heartened and very encouraged by the increasing global recognition of the important role of women in all facets of national life, from peacebuilding to recovery and development. We have also utilized resolution 1325 (2000) as a tool for promoting the involvement of Liberian women in all sectors of society.

The Liberian national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is a response by the President, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and the Government of Liberia, to the Secretary-General's call for the development and implementation of action plans. The plan complements initiatives such as the poverty reduction strategy and the joint programmes of the Government of Liberia and the United Nations already in place, focusing on additional and specific actions needed to promote and advance gender mainstreaming and ultimately to promote sustainable development. The Liberian national action plan strengthens efforts to advance gender equality, including Millennium Development Goal 3. Liberia has made significant efforts with great impact in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), including the national action plan.

We Liberians are proud to have been among the first to develop a national plan through a collaborative effort of the Government, United Nations agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and other partners. Our plan was launched in 2009 during the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security.

We would like to thank our partners, who were very supportive of us in this endeavour. In particular, I would like to thank the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and, of course, the United Nations family in Liberia and other partners from the international community.

We have also set up a national steering committee on the Liberian national action plan, comprising the Ministers of Gender, Justice, Defence and Foreign Affairs, United Nations agencies, civil society, and local and international NGOs to guide the implementation of the plan and provide oversight and accountability. The implementation of the plan is not limited to the actions included therein; additional activities and measures can be initiated as necessary, bearing in mind the need for coherence.

Discussions with different stakeholders in Liberia highlighted the importance of implementing the Liberian national action plan at the local, national and subregional levels over four years. The implementation periods are thus designed as short term, lasting 18 months; medium term, lasting 30 months; and long term, lasting 36 months. The plan also acknowledges that the roles and responsibilities for its full implementation must be clear and involve all relevant actors.

Further, the plan identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Government of Liberia, United Nations partners, civil society, and international and national NGOs, donors, the private sector and beneficiaries. It places lead responsibility for the promotion and implementation of the plan on the Government.

To make specific roles and responsibilities clear, the Liberian national action plan delineates a lead agency and collaborators for each activity, in addition to ensuring coordination for the implementation of the activities. A secretariat has been established, county steering committees have been set up in five counties, and a civil society observatory group is being set up to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan and to prepare a shadow report.

The Government has also taken measures at the institutional, political and legal levels to ensure the plan's implementation, including an amendment to the penal code extending the legal definition of rape, making it a non-bailable offence, and increasing its penalty to life imprisonment. We have also established a criminal court

to specifically adjudicate sexual offence cases, and established a sex crimes unit at the Ministry of Justice to prosecute sexual offence cases. In addition, and among others, a national commission on disabilities has been established and a national gender policy has been launched and is being implemented.

We also have undertaken the training of border security officials in handling gender-based violence issues, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and the development and current implementation of a national gender-based violence plan of action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence issues. Presently, the action plan is under review to ensure that those emerging issues are captured.

A gender equity in politics bill, designed to increase women's participation in governance, political parties and other institutions, has been introduced in Parliament and is awaiting approval for passage into law. A civil service code of conduct — proposing that all public institutions establish an environment conducive to the meaningful participation and advancement of women through the adoption of policies and procedures to address gender inequalities, including language on sexual harassment — has been developed and is currently under review.

We have also established a national rural women's structure to ensure that rural women's participation in the development and reconstruction process is part of the development agenda. We also held a conference on women in cross-border trade to recognize the role women play across borders as they help to sustain our economies. We have also established community policing forums nationwide, mainly headed by women, to improve citizen-police relations.

However, some challenges remain, and I will name a few that militate against the effective implementation of the plan. These include the challenges of harmonizing international, regional and subregional instruments with national laws; capacitybuilding and training; recruiting and retaining women in the security sector, particularly in the armed forces; the passage into law of the gender in politics bill; weak traditional peacebuilding structures and mechanisms; a high maternal mortality rate due to inadequately trained health practitioners and limited health care facilities; and women's limited access to microcredit and control over resources.

However, we have taken some concrete steps, and the plans for the next two years include the development of a strategy to ensure 20 per cent participation of women in the security sector by 2011. Presently, women constitute 30 per cent of immigration officers and 15 per cent of the national police. We also plan to earmark funding for long-term plans and the sustainability of the programmes; develop a fund-raising exercise and strategy and a donor roundtable to raise funds for the effective implementation of the plan; develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy; initiate affirmative action processes that will address the gaps in women's participation at all levels; and promote strong partnerships and strategic linkages.

We have also taken steps to work with UNIFEM to develop indicators. We note that this is an important subject here, and we support the recommendation contained in the presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/22) to incorporate the indicators as a measurement of progress. Furthermore, this positive experience has led us to support the indicators annexed to the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2010/498). We believe that these indicators constitute a work in progress and that the Secretary-General should be requested to continue to support the development of a comprehensive framework that can be used as a yardstick for assessment of global progress. Liberia would further support the elaboration of guidelines for data collection and analysis, as well as for a reporting template involving appropriate training opportunities.

We would also like to commend the Under-Secretary-General for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, and thank her for her presence here today. We pledge our full commitment to the process and ask Governments to wish us well as we strive to improve the condition to women around the world.