

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, UN Women Executive Director to the United Nations.

It is an honor to address the Security Council and present the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security.

I join the Deputy Secretary-General in thanking the Presidency of India and the previous Council President, Guatemala, for encouraging us to address the role of women's civil society organizations in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and peacebuilding. We are grateful that this Open Debate was rescheduled after last month's hurricane. We thank the Council for having met exceptionally on 31 October to adopt the Presidential Statement, which welcomed the enhanced participation, representation, and involvement of women in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict and in peacebuilding. I also thank our partner, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and its Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, and Ms. Binta Diop, speaking for civil society, for their participation here today.

The very origin of Security Council resolution 1325 is the courage, leadership and the accomplishments of women's civil society organizations that promote peace under what are often unimaginably difficult circumstances.

Today we will hear many examples of the contributions of women leaders and civil society organizations. I would like to draw your attention to what women's groups in Mali are doing right now to contribute to non-violent solutions to the crisis. In spite of their absence from official conflict resolution processes, women leaders in the North are using informal channels to call on the leaders of armed groups to participate in peace dialogues. Just two weeks ago, nearly 1,000 women leaders and members of civil society groups gathered in Bamako and delivered a common call for peace, expressing solidarity across ethnic and other divisions and recommended specific measures to protect women's rights and prevent violence against women and children. They asserted that now is the time to dedicate funding to reparations, care and the empowerment of survivors. Wherever there is conflict, whether in Mali, Syria, the Middle East, or Eastern DRC, women must be part of the solution.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The Secretary-General's report assesses the state of implementation of resolution 1325 in the areas of conflict prevention, women's protection, participation, and gender-responsive relief and recovery. The report notes the rising number of countries and regional organizations with strategies on women, peace and security, including the recently announced Pacific Regional Action Plan.

In the area of conflict prevention, the report finds that more actors, including the Security Council, are engaged in early warning to detect threats to women and girls. However, effective prevention of violence against women and girls remain a challenge.

One need look no further than Syria or Mali to find situations where conflict has severely affected women and children. Sexual and gender-based crimes persist, along with other abuses that affect women differently from men, such as forced displacement, loss of means of survival, and limited access to basic services.

In the area of participation, particularly in formal peace processes, the report notes that while some good examples exist, specific efforts are needed to increase the number of women on official delegations. Of the 14 peace negotiations co-led by the UN in 2011, only four had delegations that included a woman. Of nine peace agreements signed in 2011, only two – Yemen and Somalia – contained provisions on women and peace and security.

In the area of elections, the report shows the value of temporary special measures to increase numbers of women candidates. Yet out of nine post-conflict elections last year, only one, Uganda, employed an electoral gender

quota, producing a 35 per cent female parliament. In the other eight elections, women won between four and 13 per cent of seats.

In the area of protection, the report finds that mechanisms such as community patrols, access to legal aid, rapid response and surge teams have multiplied in the past year. There have been initiatives to establish integrated services, address fuel and lighting needs, and train security personnel. And women's protection is now part of standard operating procedures for security sector personnel in some contexts.

Despite progress, the report finds persistent protection gaps as well as obstacles to women's and girl's access to justice. We therefore welcome the attention in the Presidential Statement to mission drawdown and the imperative of preventing any erosion of the protection environment during transitions.

In the area of relief and recovery, the report finds that post-conflict financial allocations to women's empowerment and gender equality are low but increasing. The percentage of project spending targeting gender specific needs rose from an estimated 5.7 per cent as of 2010 to 7.1 per cent this year. This is an improvement but is still far from the 15 per cent minimum spending target set in the Secretary-General's action plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding.

The report emphasizes the need for stronger attention to women's post-conflict employment and other forms of livelihood support.

The report has a special section on gender-responsive prevention and resolution of conflict. It notes that gender expertise and the participation of women in official peace processes is decisive in ensuring greater sensitivity of the subsequent accord to women's rights and gender equality. For this to happen, gender issues must be addressed at the earliest possible stages – right from the start of dialogue and peace negotiations.

The report welcomes opportunities created in the past year for women to participate in international strategy and donor conferences, including in the Central African Republic, Afghanistan and South Sudan. However, it notes that insufficient attention is given to improving women's access to national or international peace dialogues.

Greater efforts must be made to invite women to participate in conflict resolution forums.

To ensure greater progress, the report recommends action in three broad areas.

First, consistent implementation of international norms and standards on the human rights of women and girls is needed across all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict and build peace.

The report calls for systematic attention to women and peace and security commitments across the Security Council's actions. It notes in particular the need to sustain implementation of these commitments in situations of mission drawdown and transition.

Second, when it comes to women's participation and representation, determination is needed to provide more opportunities, eliminate obstacles, and build capacity for influence.

The report cites the need for more women mediators, advisers, negotiators and observers in peace processes, and more women in senior management of international and regional organizations, and calls for measures to address obstacles to their participation. In elections, temporary special measures help to encourage women's participation as voters and candidates. Special attention to the protection of women human rights defenders is called for. In UN missions, sector-specific gender experts can advance mainstreaming. Capacity building of women's organizations during and after armed conflict will help amplify women's influence.

Finally, there is a need for continued improvement of tracking and accountability systems for the implementation of women and peace and security commitments, including at regional and national levels.

It is recommended that challenges in national and regional implementation of women and peace and security commitments be assessed, including in upcoming reviews of National Action Plans. The need for increased coordination and consistent tracking of results at the UN is also noted.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates:

To summarize, we need determined leadership and dedicated systems to realise changes on the ground. With regard to leadership, I note the recent significant appointments of women to strategic international and regional peace and security roles. I welcome the appointment of Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Fatou Bensouda, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. I also welcome the appointment of Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as chair of the African Union Commission, and Ms Mari Skåre as the NATO special representative on women, peace and security.

While these high level appointments are welcome, I note with concern that the United Nations itself must do better in building the pipeline of women candidates for these positions. Since June 2010, women's share of senior UN positions (P5 to D2) in political missions has actually dropped from 23 per cent to 18 per cent, and in peacekeeping missions from 24 per cent to 21 per cent. The UN System is currently reviewing this situation to take appropriate action.

To conclude, the Secretary-General's report notes that we are not seeing results at the pace that we expected or that women rightfully expect of us. For this, we need to ensure that women have opportunities to play their full role in peace and security. We know there is no shortage of women's leadership. However, as the Secretary-General's report points out, there IS a shortage of opportunities for women to engage in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. We must create these opportunities.

Creating these opportunities is not impossible, but it takes a special effort. It requires determination to make a priority of preventing gender-based violence in conflict. It requires determination to investigate and prosecute abuses of women's rights, or to insist on including women in a donor conference or a peace negotiation. This determination is not a matter of simply 'going through the motions'. It is about 'going the extra mile'. UN Women and our partners in the UN system and civil society are here to go that extra mile with you.

I thank you.