



**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia
to the United Nations
135 East 36 Street, New York, N.Y. 10016
Tel: (212) 685-2003 • Fax: (212) 685-1561**

Check
Against Delivery

STATEMENT BY

**HONOURABLE DR. THEO-BEN GURIRAB, MP
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
INFORMATION & BROADCASTING**

**DURING THE
SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE**

ON

"WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY"

**UNITED NATIONS - NEW YORK
24 OCTOBER 2000**

Members of the Security Council,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Delegates and Friends,

Let me begin by expressing my hearty commendation to the Secretary-General for his personal participation in this debate and for his important statement. We are proud of him and fully support his leadership in this and other worthy endeavours. His Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela King, has made a constructive contribution in this meeting and I thank her for her outstanding work.

The preparations for this meeting would not have been successful without the cooperation and advice of the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM). I thank Ms. Noeleen Heyser, Executive Director of UNIFEM, for her dedication.

The continuing efforts being made by UNIFEM to peace activities of women at the grassroots level are greatly appreciated by all. My thanks also go to all the Agencies for their contributions and support.

Fifty-five years ago today, the Charter of the United Nations came into being. Yet, it has taken the international community many decades to recognize that women are among the principal victims of war, conflict and insecurity. They must thus be treated as indispensable partners in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today's meeting constitutes, therefore, a new and significant beginning for the Security Council. That is, the Council should conscientiously make use of contributions women can make in dealing with the issues of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, protection of women and girls in armed conflict, peacemaking, peacekeeping and support operations. The images we all saw on the video at the beginning of this meeting tell the full story and its implications.

No one can deny the fact that women shoulder the heavy burden of sustaining embattled societies, while at the same time attending to traumas, miseries and violence during armed conflicts. Regrettably, peace negotiations are habitually male dominated. The result being underutilizing capabilities of women in conflict prevention, resolution and settlement and willfully ignoring their concerns.

Armed conflict affects women in special ways. Women are demonstrating this time and again but apparently to no avail. They are among the first civilians to become refugees or internally displaced persons; They are the ones nonetheless who are expected to look after children left in a state of despair and suffering. Women assume the responsibility of picking up the pieces, bringing together family life and promoting social harmony in the aftermath of war. However, there are no special measures aimed at assisting them during and after armed conflict. The impact of warfare and death on children requires purposeful attention and, no less, related negative effects on women. In particular, as we are reviewing UN peace operations, we need to have better understanding of the impact of conflict on women and girls in order to ensure adequate provision for their safety and protection.

As regards to children, the Security Council Resolution S/RES/1261 (1999) adopted on 25 August 1999, among other things, ***"urges States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law through political and other***

efforts, including promotion of the availability of alternatives for children to their participation in armed conflict." Doing this will lessen mothers' and women's burden. May I express here a word of gratitude to the Jamaican Presidency, during the month of July, for pushing this heart wrenching issue a step further into the limelight.

Never before has the necessity for equal participation of women at the peace table been felt greater than today. During the Special Session of the review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, this issue was repeatedly emphasized and urgent calls were made for world peace, end to armed conflict and human suffering. Those cries for peace and human security still resonate. We must listen to and engage women in search of lasting solutions.

Women have the right to participate in aspects of peace process, peace negotiations and implementation of agreements as well as post-conflict monitoring, peace enforcement and reconstruction.

Gender-based violence against women and girls is widely recorded and it calls out for international awareness campaign to put an end to all that.

For this to begin to happen, mindset, especially of men, must change and give way to new thinking and a new beginning for the United Nations in the field of conflict resolution and peacekeeping. The time is now to move away from perceiving women only as victims of conflict but also and more importantly as equal participants in security peace and security in the world.

In conflict situations, violence against women, including rape is used as a weapon of war in unconscionable violation of their human rights and dignity. It is timely and compelling that the full force of international humanitarian and human rights laws be applied effectively against all culprits.

Namibia supports the strengthening of women's capacities to participate in all United Nations peace operations and to participate fully in decision-making at levels. Women should continue to be involved in greater numbers in the ongoing efforts to promote peace and resolve conflicts, including through appointments of qualified African women as special envoys and representatives of the Secretaries-General of the UN and of the OAU. In this regard, Namibia welcomes the contribution made by the OAU Women and Peace Committee. Efforts should be made to enhance further cooperation with them. We are convinced that if and when a gender unit is established in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a conducive link with the OAU Women's Peace Committee will be served.

Peace missions, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities need to have provisions on the protection of women in their mandates. Women should also take on high-level roles in field-based civilian peace and security operations at the senior decision-making and management levels. A good beginning has been made - which we welcome - concerning a gender unit in the peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and East Timor. We encourage the Secretary-General to establish similar units in other peacekeeping missions. To date, the Security Council dispatched successful fact-finding missions to conflict areas. In our view, a senior gender expert should be included in such missions, so as to have a full appreciation of the gender dimension of ongoing or potential conflicts.

Just last month, world leaders, at the Millennium Summit, commended the Brahimi Report and called for further deliberation to ensure the speedy implementation of its recommendations with a view to strengthening the peacekeeping capacity of our Organisation.

In this context, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) had organised a timely and successful seminar, from 29 to 31 May 2000, in Windhoek, Namibia. Its theme was: **Mainstreaming of Peacekeeping in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations**. The Namibian government and the people of Namibia were immensely honoured to have hosted that seminar and offered all possible support towards its success.

The Namibian Plan of Action, amongst others, recommended that *"lessons learned from current and prior missions on gender should be incorporated at the planning state of a new mission"*, and that *"the current format of reporting, particularly with regard to situation reports and periodic reports of the Secretary-General, should include progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions."*

Namibia fully endorses this Plan of Action and urges all concerned to take its proposals into account when formulating policy objectives and implementation plans in respect of the Brahimi Report.

In my previous capacity in the other UN Principal Organ, I had numerous opportunities for addressing many topical social and humanitarian issues, particularly during the three key Special Sessions of the General Assembly, relating to Small Island Developing States; Beijing +5; and Copenhagen +5. Also, as a follow-up to the 1997/1998 Secretary-General's Report on the Causes of Conflict in Africa, we established a Working Group to monitor the implementation process. We have the first report of that Working Group, so ably prepared by the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Singapore and Spain, whom I heartily thank once again for their excellence and dedication.

Without exception, one way or another, it was pointed out that peace, security and social development are unceasingly being undermined by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. We are now all agreed on the devastating effects of these deadly weapons on civilian populations in Africa and in other developing countries.

I know that this pressing issue will be dealt with in a coordinated manner in the near future in Mali. Needless to add, in this debate however, that this type of weaponry clearly contributes to prolonging armed conflict and imposes severe hardship, especially on women and children. By the same token, disarmament, demobilisation, resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-combatants should take into account the special needs of women and girls.

Landmine awareness campaigns and demining activities cannot ignore the concerns and interest of the real victims, namely women and children. As I said elsewhere, women are not really begging for favours; they are actually demanding their legitimate rights and opportunities to contribute to peace, development and prosperity.

The views expressed today indicate that maintenance of peace and security is a collective effort. It should, therefore, involve all women and men for our common good. To that end, let us put our words into deeds to make this our one world a peaceful and secure place for this and future generations.

I Thank You.