



**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Namibia
to the United Nations**

135 East 36th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016
Tel: (212) 685-2003 • Fax: (212) 685-1561

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STATEMENT

BY

MR. MARTIN ANDJABA
AMBASSADOR & PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AT

THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE
ON
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

NEW YORK, 28 OCTOBER 2002

Mr. President,

When Namibia, during its Presidency of the Security Council in October 2000, decided to place the issue of Women, Peace and Security on the Council's agenda, it was well aware of the tremendous and shocking hardships faced by women in ordinary life, but more so during times of conflict.

We were also aware of the commendable programmes already in place to address this dire situation, such as the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. It was however, disappointingly clear that progress was too little and too slow and that the changing nature of conflicts resulted in a deterioration of the situation of women and girls. We therefore saw the urgent need to step up efforts, and hence the Security Council debate which resulted in the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

Resolution 1325 (2002) was hailed as a landmark decision and it became a strong instrument with which the rights of women and girls could be negotiated and protected. In some cases, it served as a strong deterrent to halt further violence and abuse against women and girls.

Mr. President,

Today, we are meeting here on the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and we thank you for the initiative to convene this meeting. We have before us a detailed and well-researched Study on women, peace and security, and the Report by the Secretary-General, which highlights the major findings and conclusions of the Study. We thank the Secretary-General for his presence here today, and for introducing the reports. Our congratulations also go to the Special Advisor on Gender issues and Advancement of Women for the excellent work on the Study in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security.

The Report has presented to us in clear terms, the challenges that must be addressed if progress is to be made in the achievement of the goal of gender equality in relation to peace and security. More importantly, it has submitted a set of important recommendations, which, if implemented, can strengthen and accelerate the implementation of the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000), and can have a profoundly positive impact on the situation of women and girls in conflict situations, and in general.

The Study as well as other reports, show that a number of measures have been taken to implement the resolution. However, we must also conclude that very little has been achieved in practical terms to improve the plight of women and girls, and that the odds stacked against them remain as high as ever.

Women continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict. A large majority of refugees and internally displaced persons are women. They are still subjected to rape, sexual exploitation, trafficking and other forms of dehumanization. Women are also not sufficiently and appropriately represented at all levels and stages of decision making in peace processes as well as peacekeeping operations.

There are also the unique and particular hardships faced by women and girls under foreign occupation. They have to cope with all the prejudices against women in the most inhumane conditions and under oppression. It is our hope that this issue will be addressed more comprehensively in future, and that a study on the plight of women and girls under foreign occupation will be submitted to the Security Council for appropriate action.

Similarly, we feel that it is important that an analysis be done on the impact of sanctions from a gender perspective. In the light of the above, it is thus clear that there remains therefore a critical need to strengthen our resolve and resources to ensure that all provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) are fully implemented.

We therefore welcome and support the Secretary-General's call for the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations System, NGOs, the Civil Society and others, to take further decisive action to ensure that the concerns of women and girls are incorporated into all our efforts to promote peace and security.

Mr. President,

My delegation welcomes the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, where gender concerns were taken into consideration when genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were defined. Also important is the fact that the International Criminal Court will have a fair representation of female Judges, and that there will be a gender balance in all three organs of the Court.

Despite these positive developments, much more must to be done to ensure gender sensitive justice and to address the specific needs of women. In this regard, my delegation attaches great importance to recommendations pertaining to the appointment of Judges and Advisors with legal expertise on specific issues, such as violations of the rights of women and girls, including gender based and sexual violence, in future ad hoc tribunals created by the Security Council.

Mr. President,

My delegation strongly endorses the need to increase the participation of women in all aspects of peace operations, in particular at the highest levels of decision-making. Women are perfectly capable and in many instances possess special qualities, which can be of benefit to peace operations. The full involvement of women in negotiations of peace agreements at national, regional and international levels have to become common practice.

Furthermore, gender perspectives have to be explicitly incorporated into the mandates of all peacekeeping missions. At the same time, gender representation at Headquarters and at missions should be strengthened. In this regard, we hope that a gender unit will be established at Headquarters in line with the recommendation of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

In this connection, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and welcome his renewed undertaking to set concrete targets for the appointment of women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys in order to reach a 50% target by 2015. My

country is also well on its way to achieve a 50/50 ratio between men and women as soon as possible and at all levels and branches of Government.

Mr. President,

To ensure durable peace after peacekeeping operations, and to prevent gender inequalities to persist or deepen during the period after conflict, the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes should also benefit from strong gender perspectives. This will ensure the creation of more equitable and sustainable societies. The participation of women in the post-conflict, rehabilitation and reconstruction processes, therefore has to be strengthened by, amongst others, incorporating their needs in initial project appraisals and by developing targeted activities, with adequate resources, which are focused on specific constraints facing women and girls. Multilateral organizations, which provide assistance after conflicts, can play an important role in establishing these standards.

Once again, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to thank you for organizing today's meeting. The Security Council must show leadership and commitment to seriously address the plight of women and girls in armed conflict. This will further strengthen all efforts towards the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). I wish to reaffirm my delegation's resolve to continue to play an active part, in the efforts by the international community to achieve this goal.

I thank you.