

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Asha Hagi Elmi Amin
At the UN Security Council Open Debate
on Women, Peace and Security
5TH October 2009**

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

I would like to thank the Security Council for the invitation to speak here today. I am speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, a coalition of international civil society organizations that advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to maintain international peace and security. I am here today in my capacity as an advocate for the political, economic and social rights of women in Somalia. In 2000, my colleagues and I formed the “Sixth Clan” to carve out Somali women’s space in the male-dominated political world. Through this Sixth Clan identity, for the first time Somali women participated as equal partners and decision-makers in the peace process, and we ensured quotas for women in the parliament. This was the first time that women were represented in a peace process in Somalia, and I was the first woman to sign the agreements. The peace and reconciliation process in which we participated was the first to be successful after numerous previous attempts.

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security coalition serves as a bridge between women’s human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations, and policy-makers at U.N. Headquarters, and is comprised of: Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Action to Prevent War; Global Justice Center; Hague Appeal for Peace/Peaceboat US; Human Rights Watch; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; International Rescue Committee; International Women’s Program at the Open Society Institute; International Women’s Tribune Centre; United Methodist Women’s Division, General Board of Global Ministries – United Methodist Church; Women’s Refugee Commission; Women’s Action for New Directions; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

This Open Debate comes at a time of increased international attention to women in conflict situations. The Security Council last week adopted resolution 1888, and today we see the Council adopting resolution 1889, which lays out important next steps on international obligations to ensuring women’s rights in conflict. We welcome the advancements these resolutions herald, such as the new support structure to combat the use of sexual violence in conflict situations, and to ensure justice for survivors of such violence. We also welcome the continued recognition that women in conflict situations are not only victims, but also powerful agents for peace and security in their communities.

However, without accountability for in these resolutions, persistent impediments to their implementation will remain. Your support is needed in ensuring the strong, high-level leadership, the coherent and systematic approach towards implementation, and the concrete monitoring mechanism to address gaps in the system that these resolutions necessitate.

As the Security Council rightly noted in 9 years ago in resolution 1325, women’s meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making is integral to conflict transformation; to post-conflict stability; and to post-conflict re-building. The Council has reinforced this sentiment in its subsequent

resolutions on women, peace and security, as well as in many country-specific resolutions—but without providing an accountability structure for implementation. As a result, women remain at the margins of peace-talks – to the detriment of society as a whole.

As I know from my experience in Somalia, women have the potential to add immense value to peace processes and negotiations. The women I worked with brought tolerance, compassion, forgiveness, and practical solutions that are the basic tenets of reconciliation. In the Somali process, women often represented and spoke for the silent majority; for the unarmed civilians, who are mainly women and children. That silent majority needs the voice that these women brought to the table.

We know that women's contribution to the peace process is vital and worthy. Women speak not only about so-called “women's issues,” but, as we can see from the practical lessons learned in Somalia, women can speak at the highest level on key political, social and economic issues relevant to sustainable peace, such as clean water and health.

Women's participation in peace processes is not optional: it is a requirement. However, it is not only the job of women to bring these voices and issues into all conflict resolution and rebuilding efforts. Men must also ensure that women's rights and interests are meaningfully addressed in all peace processes, and included in peace agreements and conflict transformation planning, such as security sector and judicial reform, service provision, in addressing impunity, and in the truth and reconciliation process.

Twelve months from now, the international community will again turn its focus on resolution 1325 to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of its adoption by the Security Council. We now look to you, the international community, to live up to your obligations to women in conflict by ensuring that women are engaged in all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution processes; that the rights and interests of women are addressed in these processes; and by demonstrating marked improvement in the number of women in any peacebuilding and civilian peacekeeping support your Government provides.

Your concrete support for accountability, leadership, and resourcing is essential. Over the next 12 months, we urge each of you to support key developments within the UN system: by ensuring that the new consolidated UN gender entity for women and its Under Secretary-General is well-resourced; and by supporting the Secretary-General's appointment of the Special Representative on women, peace and security; and by ensuring gender expertise is further mainstreamed in UN entities like the Department of Political Affairs.

Finally, I thank you for this opportunity to address the Council today. We women are not only victims in conflict, but agents for positive change. Women have shown courage, commitment, and determination in these situations. We have been positive contributors to peace processes. We often risk our lives to take these actions.

What women still lack is coherent and practical support from the international community. Women need this support to secure their places in decision-making positions; to help end these conflicts; and to rebuild the country to ensure sustainable peace after these conflicts have devastated our communities.

We look forward to all of you - here in this room, and in the broader international community - providing that concrete support. Without your support to women in conflict, we put at risk our dreams of a safer world, and of ensuring true international peace and security.