

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

Statement by Mr. Sarki Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to note that this statement was supposed to have been delivered by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Viola Onwuliri, but, as the meeting was postponed and rescheduled for today, I am very happy to deliver this statement on her behalf.

On behalf of my delegation, Mr. President, I should like to join other speakers in commending your leadership of the Security Council for this month. We also commend your initiative of organizing this debate on women and peace and security. We wish also to commend the delegation of Guatemala for the presidential statement (S/PRST/2012/23) that it put forward under its presidency.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the subject (S/2012/732). We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his introductory remarks this morning, as well as Under-Secretaries-General Michelle Bachelet and Herve Ladsous, and Ms. Bineta Diop for their statements.

The Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), which was a milestone achievement towards the recognition of the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance of peace and security, including conflict management, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. It is particularly significant that this debate is breaking new ground by focusing on the specific role played by women's civil society organizations in the areas of conflict prevention, resolution and recovery. We are delighted to see Ms. Diop involved in this activity for so long. It is common knowledge that women seldom or hardly ever initiate violent conflicts, yet they bear a great burden on various levels: physical, psychological, economical, social and political. Their suffering is compounded by their exclusion from key decision-making processes that could potentially lead to peace and stability.

Today's discussion affords us the distinct opportunity to reflect on our achievements so far, but more importantly to make an assessment of outstanding requirements to realize those objectives. As the Council strives to ensure that the provisions of the women and peace and security agenda are integrated into its work, it stands to benefit from the unique grass-roots perspectives that women's civil society organizations could provide. In that regard, we acknowledge the progress made in the promotion of women's rights in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, as demonstrated by the increase in the number of dedicated implementation frameworks, strategies and coordination mechanisms.

We believe that more needs to be done to create an enabling environment for the participation of women in all stages of the peace process. Such efforts to create the right conditions for ensuring women's full participation should include increasing their participation and representation in preventive diplomacy and in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. They should also include strengthening the capacities of the relevant Government institutions and women's organizations involved with conflict and post-conflict issues.

Nigeria recognizes the central role of UN-Women, working in close partnership and collaboration with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and for Children and Armed Conflict, respectively. The gaps and challenges hindering the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are indeed substantial. National, regional and international actors must rededicate themselves to addressing them. We believe that developing and implementing national action plans constitutes a viable strategy for fulfilling the obligations under resolution 1325 (2000).

As a signatory to the Dakar Declaration of the Economic Community of West African States, Nigeria has committed itself to accelerating the national and regional implementation of that important resolution. Nigeria is also committed to fulfilling its obligations under the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa. Violence, poverty, lack of access to education and health care, and limited economic opportunities all combine to undermine the role of women and girls in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and peacebuilding. It is therefore necessary that we develop and take measures to address these inherent obstacles.

Promoting women's equality and empowerment is, in our view, one of the best ways to address the root causes of conflicts and thereby prevent them. We recognize the relevance of and relationship between the Council's preventive diplomacy initiatives and its women and peace and security agenda.

We remain committed to improving the status of women in all parts of Nigeria and to enhancing their vital and meaningful participation in conflict resolution. Nigeria has over the years proved its consistent commitment to the achievement of women's empowerment and gender equality. Gender equity and equality have gained a high degree of prominence in Nigeria's national development agenda. At the level of legislation, for instance, the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, as a means to further enhance women's equal access to social and economic activities and resources, is now before our National Assembly for consideration. The Bill seeks to domesticate the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa.

In compliance with those principles and the provisions of the various gender frameworks, and as a means to confront the challenges of meeting gender equality and women's empowerment, Nigeria, under the leadership of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, has for the first time attained 33 per cent representation for women in the decision-making process, appointing, for instance, 13 women ministers in the federal Cabinet. We have also attained 50 per cent representation in the judiciary, with the Chief Justice of the Federation being a woman for the first time in Nigeria's history.

In the area of assistance to women, Nigeria will ensure the provision of social security and safety nets that can guarantee a better future for vulnerable members of society, especially women and children.

We look forward to the high-level review to be held in 2015 on the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and will remain confident that this and future initiatives of the Council will play pivotal roles in national, regional and global strategies on the women and peace and security agenda.