

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Resolution 1820
Thursday, June 19, 2008

Statement by H.E Ms. Graham, Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

New Zealand welcomes this opportunity to focus on women and peace and security, and once again reaffirms its strong support for resolution 1325 (2000). New Zealand is committed to seeking ways to enhance and strengthen the implementation of the resolution through our development cooperation programmes, peacekeeping efforts and domestic policies.

Resolution 1325 (2000) remains the internationally accepted blueprint for a multifaceted response to the issues facing women in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. It has played an invaluable part in highlighting the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

New Zealand welcomes increased Security Council attention to the reality of sexual violence during conflict and to the need to end impunity for crimes, including sexual violence. Sadly, sexual violence continues unabated in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. It is a gross violation of women's human rights, which further exacerbates the vulnerability of women and girls in times of conflict. Sexual violence is an attack not only on the dignity of women but also on the peace process: it raises significant barriers to reconciliation and peace. New Zealand attaches great importance to the need to eliminate such violence.

We welcome the advances that have been made in these areas by the United Nations and Member States. We strongly endorse the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on all forms of violence against women. New Zealand has actively supported General Assembly resolutions on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations.

New Zealand's response to resolution 1325 (2000) is proactive and includes a number of specific steps to encourage implementation both domestically and internationally. Here are four examples of that.

First, New Zealand is committed to encouraging women to undertake assignments on peacekeeping missions. Women from the New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police and our wider society are an integral part of New Zealand's regional, United Nations and other international peacekeeping efforts. This includes women working in high-risk areas, such as Afghanistan, and on operational missions, such as in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, up to 30 per cent of all of our police peacekeeping deployments are female — among the highest rate in the world.

Secondly, the New Zealand Defence Force has worked hard to integrate women at all levels and in all trades of the Force, including combat. Its diversity strategy recognizes the full value of integrating women into the Defence Force and the benefits of having women at more senior levels.

Thirdly, New Zealand attaches priority to promoting women's rights through the delivery of official development assistance. Gender-based violence is a core focus area for New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID). NZAID supports a number of initiatives in the Pacific region aimed at empowering women and mitigating their exposure to violence. For example, New Zealand is currently involved in the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme, a joint initiative of NZAID, the New Zealand Police and the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police organization. It seeks to tackle domestic violence and influence social change.

Fourthly, the NZAID conflict and peacebuilding policy identifies women and girls in conflict and post-conflict areas as a priority group for attention and specifically includes the need to provide support for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It highlights the gender impact of conflict and the role of women in peacebuilding.

In conclusion, New Zealand commends you, Mr. President, for the opportunity for this debate on resolution 1325 (2000), but we agree that progress towards achieving its major goals has been slow and uneven. There remains an urgent need to increase political commitment and resources to ensure its systematic

implementation.