



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

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ON

“WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY”

AT

THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

New York
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Mr. President,

I would, first of all, like to express our appreciation to you for convening today's open debate on an important subject of interest to all of us.

We all have a shared concern about the plight of women in armed conflicts. This is an issue that has not received adequate attention of the international community. We therefore, view the present initiative as an important opportunity to reflect on issues concerning protection of women in conflict situations and their role in conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peace-building.

The issues raised in the background paper circulated by Ambassador Martin Andjaba and the elements which are being proposed for incorporation in the resolution which would be considered subsequently by the Security Council on the subject of "Women and Peace and Security", are most pertinent. However, their detailed consideration and implementation can not be the exclusive responsibility of the Security Council. The Council can focus on some aspects which fall within its domain. In fact, most of the issues covered in the background paper are currently being discussed in the Economic and Social Council and other relevant bodies of the General Assembly. Instead of duplicating our efforts, we must focus our attention on strengthening the existing mechanisms. Each organ of the United Nations has its own defined sphere of responsibilities which must be respected.

Mr. President,

We all know that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform of Action contains comprehensive recommendations on "women and armed conflict". Unfortunately, there is less enthusiasm in ensuring implementation of the relevant provisions of the Beijing Declaration. There is a need to ensure early and effective implementation of these recommendations. It would not be prudent to start the process anew at a forum which does not have the mandate to deal with all the relevant issues in a comprehensive manner.

Having said that, my delegation notes with concern that during the last decade the number of conflicts has increased manifold, so has the devastation that has been inflicted upon civilian populations around the world particularly women, children and the elderly people. In recent years, a number of United Nations reports have highlighted the suffering of women and children in armed conflicts. This catalogue of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is an affront to humanity.

Violence against women has taken myriad shape and form, including sexual slavery, rape, systematic rape, sexual abuse and forced pregnancies. Displacement compounded by loss of home and property, poverty, family disintegration and separation and other consequences of armed conflict are severely affecting target populations, especially women and children. Girls are also abducted or recruited, in violation of international law, into situations of armed conflict, including as combatants, sexual slaves or providers of domestic services. The recommendations contained in various reports on violence against women and children should be implemented to improve their plight in conflict situations.

Mr. President,

Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that "all are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination to equal protection of the law". Article 55 of the Charter stresses "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women is a giant step towards protection of the rights of women against all forms of violence.

Unfortunately, the civilians are subjected to enormous suffering despite existence of comprehensive international legal instruments. Violations of rights of women in conflict situations are indeed violations of fundamental human rights and principles of international humanitarian law. Respect for these legal instruments needs to be ensured by all the Member States of the United Nations through inter-governmental process. It cannot be imposed from outside, nor can it be subjected to any imaginary "international standards".

Mr. President,

It is unfortunate that rape is used as a tactical weapon of war to humiliate and weaken the morale of the perceived enemy. This pernicious weapon is used to terrorize a population or to force civilians to flee, as has recently been practiced in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and the Great Lakes region in Africa. Rape is being used as a weapon of war against innocent women and girls in Jammu and Kashmir even today, where people are struggling for their right of self-determination. Amnesty International catalogued such incidents in Jammu and Kashmir as early as in 1993, highlighting that "rape and ill-treatment of women are usually reported to have taken place during counter-insurgency operations".

In Afghanistan, the reluctance on the part of the international community to engage in the country's reconstruction and rehabilitation process continues to compound the suffering of the civilian population, particularly women and girls. Apparently, there is a cultural bias when it comes to dealing with the problems and issues relating to the women folk in Afghanistan. Instead of addressing their genuine humanitarian needs, sanctions have been imposed on the people of Afghanistan which have further compounded their suffering.

Sanctions imposed on other countries also need to be revisited to minimize the suffering of civilian populations particularly women and children. Notably, the background paper on "Women and Peace and Security" and the proposed draft resolution do not say anything about sanctions and their impact on women and children. Due consideration should be given to this important aspect of the debate.

Mr. President,

It has also been widely reported that poverty, hunger and desperation in conflict situations may force women and girls into prostitution obliging them to offer sex for food or shelter, for safe conduct through the war zone. This aspect has not been highlighted in the background paper which is under review in the Council today.

The focus of the international community should be devoted equally on poverty eradication, development, conflict resolution and conflict prevention, so that crimes of any form and manifestation against any section of a society, be it men or women, are not allowed to take place in the first instance.

The Charter places clear obligation on the Security Council to uphold international peace and security. There can be no two views on the fact that prevention is better than cure. The Council, therefore, needs to act to treat the disease itself rather than to react to deal with the symptoms subsequently with attendant high costs in terms of widespread death and devastation.

In conclusion, I may reaffirm that Pakistan remains committed to peace, prosperity, progress and development of peoples in all parts of the world. We will continue to extend unflinching support and cooperation towards achieving these goals, particularly the alleviation of the sufferings of women and children in armed conflicts around the world.

I thank you, Mr. President.