

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Aisi, Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations.

Papua New Guinea appreciates the opportunity to participate in today's important meeting on women and peace and security and thanks you, Mr. President, and your delegation, for organizing it. This meeting follows on from others that we have participated in since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), including the open debate on women and peace and security held on 30 November 2012 (see S/PV.6877), which also commemorated the twelfth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

The focus of this debate is to address the obstacles to women's participation in conflict mediation, peace talks, national dialogue and donor conferences. We believe that it is important to sustain the momentum to consolidate efforts at all levels so as to effectively mainstream women as equal development partners and agents of change in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and nation-building for safer and more prosperous communities and a safer and more prosperous world. A clear case in point is the excellent contributions by women to last month's successful conclusion and adoption of the first-ever global Arms Trade Treaty.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's conclusions in his 2010 report on women's participation in peacebuilding (S/2010/466) that their participation is not only a matter of women's and girls' rights but of their status as core partners in strengthening the three pillars of durable peace, namely, economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy.

We note the important, albeit slow, strides made internationally over the past decade in addressing the disproportionate and unique impacts of armed conflict, violence and tensions, which continue to affect women and girls worldwide.

Women's and girls' protection and empowerment, particularly in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations — and even in so-called stable societies — remain a major concern and an overriding challenge for all of us. Noble initiatives such as resolution 1325 (2000), the 2010 United Nations seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding and other international, regional and national peace and security frameworks that place women and girls at the centre of peace and security continue to remain largely unfulfilled.

The unfortunate and sobering reality today is that women are still part of the battleground. They are marginalized, harassed, raped, abducted, humiliated, killed and forced to endure unwanted pregnancies, sexual abuse and slavery. Women are also still largely excluded from formal decision-making processes concerning peace and security.

The challenge for all of us today going forward is to work diligently with renewed commitment to heighten efforts to, among other actions, better institutionalize all the various processes so that they become integral parts of national and regional actions.

In the context of my own country, Papua New Guinea, I would like to share our experience with regard to women and peace and security in the framework of the civil conflict we experienced in Bougainville, which ended more than a decade ago. With the election of the first President and members of the Parliament of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the Council, on 6 July 2005, successfully concluded the mandate it had initiated to resolve the decade-long bloody conflict on Bougainville Island in Papua New Guinea.

It is worth mentioning that the Bougainville Peace Agreement, despite some challenges, is being implemented with full commitment at the highest political levels by the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government. We are equally pleased with the continuing interest and engagement of the United Nations with the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to address outstanding issues, including arms disposal, reconstruction and the holding of a referendum.

Importantly, it is worth recalling that the efforts of the women of Bougainville in pushing for peace during the conflict, which culminated in the Bougainville Peace Agreement, attest to and confirm the notion that women are agents of change, including in peace and security. Fortunately, there is growing recognition of that fact, but, as always, more needs to be done to maintain the momentum.

I would also commend the support and cooperation that Papua New Guinea continues to receive from our bilateral development partners, including Australia, the United States, New Zealand, the European Union and others, on mainstreaming gender issues that contribute to peace, security and national development. Likewise, we value similar support from regional multilateral development partners, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

At the regional level, the launch of the 2012-2015 Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, in 2012, has provided a strong framework from which national and regional actions can be better and more effectively developed and coordinated. The Action Plan was developed jointly by representatives of the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, representatives of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific and, importantly, civil society organizations. In essence, the Action Plan replicates the basic, but important, tenets of resolution 1325 (2000) as elaborated by the United Nations.

In that regard, we acknowledge the leadership of Ms. Bachelet and the work of UN-Women in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific, as reflected in her attendance at our Pacific Leaders' Summit — to represent the Secretary-General — held in the Cooks Islands last year. Such proactive participation has yielded positive dividends, which include the increasing involvement of women as partners in consolidating peace and security in our region.

Apart from the United Nations, we continue to have strong support from our development partners — Australia and New Zealand, along with other partners such as the European Union — which are prioritizing gender empowerment and equality by providing capacity-building programmes for our women and girls in the area of peace and security. The challenge will be the effective coordination of all the valuable resources, so that all the efforts to implement the full intent of resolution 1325 (2000) are properly realized.

Insofar as civil society efforts to promote issues relating to women, peace and security in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands region are concerned, they are increasing as a result of the groundswell of advocacy work on fostering women's and girls' development issues, including the important role they play in fostering peace and security in our communities and country.

An exemplary group that I wish to acknowledge here is the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, which is based in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, as well as the FemLINKPACIFIC organization based in Fiji, along with many other women's committees whose collective membership contributes to that important work. At the end of the day, their respective collective contributions will enhance the work we must all continue to do to consolidate the vision of resolution 1325 (2000).

Allow me to conclude by acknowledging the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security here.