

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security October 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Tanin, Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

I thank you, Madam President, for organizing such an important meeting, and congratulations on your leadership of the Council this month. I would also like to thank previous speakers for their statements and the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2014/693) on women and peace and security. I look forward to his global study of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the upcoming high-level review of the resolution.

This debate could not have come at a more timely moment. War and conflict affect more lives today — all over the world, but particularly in Afghanistan and the wider region — than at any time in recent history. Millions of families have been forced to flee their homes, and millions of women and children have been left vulnerable, bearing the brunt of the burden of those tragic circumstances.

The people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, have suffered immensely as a result of almost 40 years of war and conflict. The violence in my country has shattered their lives, interrupted their educations, threatened their livelihoods, destroyed their communities and pushed them from their homes to other countries or to unfamiliar cities and slums.

Afghanistan's refugee situation remains the largest protracted such situation in the world, and this year the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased due to a resurgence of insecurity in parts of the country. Women suffer disproportionately in situations of displacement. They often lack access to the most basic services and resources and are at a higher risk of discrimination and human rights abuses.

In the past year, there has been a rise in the violent activities of the Taliban, terrorists groups and other anti-Government armed opposition and the greatest increase in civilian deaths of the past 13 years, including many of women and girls. The Taliban and other anti-Government elements continue to launch targeted attacks and intimidation campaigns against women from all spectrums of society, from schoolgirls to female leaders, including women police officers, human rights defenders, media personnel and politicians. Insecurity has also hampered the Government's ability to prosecute human rights abusers and uphold the rule of law, thereby exacerbating women's vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, domestic abuse, harassment, forced marriage and other crimes.

Despite those challenges, Afghanistan has arrived at an important turning point that offers tremendous opportunity for strengthened progress on the women and peace and security agenda. Last month, the new President was inaugurated, representing the first democratic transition from one elected president to the next in the country's history. In this year's presidential and provincial council elections, millions of women participated as voters, and hundreds played a significant role as candidates and as campaigners, despite facing threats and intimidation. Their involvement set the tone for an Afghanistan in which women participate and contribute equally to the country's future.

President Ghani Ahmadzai and the national unity Government are committed to women's full and equal participation at all levels of governance and decision-making. The President made that clear in

his inaugural address, in which he pledged to promote women's advancement in Afghanistan and praised his wife, Rula Ghani, for the role she would play as an active public figure dedicated to promoting women's rights. This gesture is a first for our young democracy.

Just a few days ago, Afghanistan signed the women and peace and security national action plan, which aims to make progress on the four main areas of participation, protection, conflict prevention and relief and recovery. We appreciate the Government of Finland's support for the development of the plan and remain committed to implementing the women and peace and security agenda through key institutions and the national action plan for the women of Afghanistan. We are also dedicated to promoting the participation of women in the security sector and aim to increase the number of women police officers from the current 2,230 to 10,000 by 2017.

As Afghanistan prepares for the full transfer of security responsibility from international to Afghan forces at the end of 2014, the President and new leadership of the country are committed to a comprehensive reform agenda. Over the next two years, Afghanistan will hold district and parliamentary elections, reform electoral laws, convene a loya jirga to consider amendments to the Constitution and conduct a reinvigorated outreach and reconciliation process with the armed opposition. Throughout, the active role of all segments of the Afghan population, particularly Afghan women, will be essential. The Government of Afghanistan believes adamantly that their participation is critical to preserving and enhancing the gains of the past 12 years and to the future stability, democracy, prosperity and peace of the country. In that regard, the international community's continued support for Afghanistan's efforts to advance women's rights and status remains crucial.

Afghan women have suffered immensely as a result of Taliban rule, extremism and decades of war. Only when they are free from violence, want and fear will we be able to secure stability and lasting peace in Afghanistan. For those reasons, we welcome the opportunities provided to us by the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women, the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) and the adoption of the sustainable development goals to make further progress on the issue of women and peace and security, and the agenda for women in Afghanistan and for women around the world.