

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

Statement by Mr. Fernandes, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations

I thank you, Madam, for presiding over this meeting and for your leadership on this topic.

I would also like to thank the briefers for their instructive presentations.

Next year we will witness a convergence of global milestones on gender issues. Brazil looks forward to the Security Council high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) and the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a major landmark in the advancement of women. In parallel, as supported by Brazil and recommended by the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the post-2015 development agenda is expected to include a stand-alone goal for ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Yet major challenges remain, particularly when the threats of forced displacement and gender inequality overlap. Nearly two decades ago, the Beijing Platform for Action recognized that refugee and displaced women are especially vulnerable to violence and need specific measures of protection, assistance and training. At a time when the global population of forcibly displaced persons and asylum-seekers has reached record levels, it is especially important to intensify efforts to prevent women and girls from falling victim to sex and labour trafficking, gender-based violence, legal discrimination and other abuses.

Prevention is always the best solution. Even after hostilities have begun, diplomatic measures should not be prematurely discarded. The temptation to employ forceful and military measures to resolve international crises constitutes, in many instances, an additional hazard to all civilians, including refugees, displaced or stateless women and girls. Women should be acknowledged and empowered as key actors in all activities that influence their future, from humanitarian assistance to decisions on displacement and repatriation; from the planning of economic recovery to the pursuit of accountability for serious crimes; and from peace processes to peacebuilding initiatives.

We should also recognize the transformative potential of the greater participation and leadership of women in society, including in conflict settings. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Brazil convened in September an event, entitled “Women, Everyday Peacebuilders”, that stressed the crucial role played by women in reconciling former combatants and mending community divisions. Given appropriate tools, women can greatly contribute to the effectiveness of post-conflict activities and therefore enhance the prospects of reaching a sustainable peace. The Secretary-General’s seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding (see S/2010/466) is a central reference in that regard.

The long-term protection of displaced women and girls is also improved when their basic needs are properly addressed. Education, training and employment, legal assistance, land and property rights and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, are vital areas to provide women subjected to forced displacement with a better perspective for their future.

Although Brazil does not fall into the category of a conflict or post-conflict situation, our National Plan of Policies for Women integrates relevant recommendations contained in resolution 1325 (2000), including those aimed at fighting sexual violence. On the external front, Brazil has launched South-South cooperation projects to tackle sexual and gender-based violence in countries affected by violence or instability. We stand ready to share our experience of social inclusion with other countries, as they could be instrumental for women in areas emerging from conflict.

Brazil has a long tradition of offering shelter and safety to victims of distant wars, regardless of their gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic group. Since last year, we have granted humanitarian visas to over 5,000 asylum seekers, including hundreds of women and girls who would otherwise be subject to a situation of extreme danger. Specific policies aimed at welcoming Syrian refugees have also been adopted by other countries in our region, which shows that, besides being a peaceful and stable region, Latin America and the Caribbean remain committed to the cause of those displaced by conflict and persecution.

In keeping with this long-standing regional commitment, Brazil will host, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, on 2 and 3 December, a ministerial meeting in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, a non-binding regional instrument that reflects Latin America and the Caribbean's tradition of granting asylum to those in need. The declaration and action plan to be adopted in Brasilia shall represent a further step towards the improvement of our regional framework regarding the protection of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people.

At the domestic level, renewed attention is presently being given to the issue of statelessness, a worldwide challenge affecting millions of persons, often due to unequal treatment of women and men by nationality laws. The Government will soon submit to the Congress a draft law on the protection of stateless persons.

The Council has been playing an increasingly relevant role in emphasizing the particular needs of women and girls affected by conflict, including those who have been forcibly displaced. The far-reaching nature of this agenda, however, demands that we do not lose sight of the important work being done by other bodies. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund and UN-Women also require and deserve our full support and attention in the enduring quest to promote, protect and empower all women around the world.