

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

Statement by Mr. Niyonzima, Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this interesting open debate of Security Council on the theme “Displaced women and girls: leaders and survivors”, under the agenda item entitled “Women and peace and security”. I would also like to thank the four speakers who took the floor this morning for their informative statements, which taught us a great deal about the theme that brings us together today.

Since decolonization, it is estimated that Africa has experienced approximately 80 coups d'état, about as many armed conflicts and around 40 civil wars. Of the 19 countries around the world where armies intervened in the 1990s, 15 are located in sub-Saharan Africa, and my country, Burundi, is one of them. It is estimated that the number of civilian losses in the current conflicts is around 90 per cent of all casualties, mostly women and children. A century ago, 90 per cent of those who died in war were soldiers or were part of the military personnel.

That dark portrait raises a very important question: why Africa? Answering that question requires points of reference. As serious and recurrent as they are, violent conflicts should not give rise to an analysis that locks Africa in a hawkish caricature or in a passive position. The Africa of peoples -the Africa of men and of women, the Africa of girls -does not only suffer conflicts; it also tries to prevent and resolve them, and in all that the role of women and girls is to be promoted.

After having heard the speeches that preceded mine, I would say that the overall picture that emerges is that, 14 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), no conflict can be resolved, no transition can be envisaged without taking into account the participation of women, who constitute half of humankind. The consequences of conflict are devastating, including for the equality between men and women. Women often have fewer resources than men with which to protect themselves. With children, they generally constitute the majority of refugee and internally displaced populations. They are the recurrent targets of tactics of warfare such as sexual violence. They are often kept out of peace talks, even though they lead peace movements and are the source of community recovery after conflict.

Women and girls are also particularly affected by the destruction of the socioeconomic infrastructure, such as hospitals, health centres, schools, water systems, roads and transportation routes. That situation radicalizes their inability to gain access to basic social services and aggravates problems related to primary and reproductive health. It also paves the way for an increase in the maternal and infant mortality rate, growth in and lack of protection from violence and sexual exploitation, and the spread of and lack of protection from risks related to HIV/AIDS.

The abuses suffered by women and girls in situations of armed conflict are variable and take the form of rape, sexual slavery and forced prostitution. Women and girl refugees are very vulnerable to the violence and exploitation at the heart of conflicts, and rather than return home they prefer to seek asylum in other lands.

We welcome the fact that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has issued guidelines for the protection of women refugees, including the prevention of sexual violence against them and measures to be taken if such acts have been committed, and that it seeks to ensure that international law provides adequate protection to women and girl refugees.

Responding to challenges specific to men and to women in conflict and post-conflict requires sensitivity and focused awareness of the human realities experienced specifically and differently by each sex. That in turn requires the appropriate training needed to make informed decisions. That ultimately requires appropriate tools, firm commitments, measures for action and evaluation, and accountability mechanisms.

With regard to the maintenance of peace, Burundi, which is the leading French-speaking troop-contributing country, supports the deployment of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Deployment of female troops and police and the appointment of advisors on the protection of women have demonstrated that one could promote the empowerment of women and address sexual violence in armed conflict and thus play a major role in post-conflict reconstruction.

With regard to women's involvement in the peace negotiation and reconciliation processes, in Burundi women played a very important role in the various negotiations that led to a comprehensive peace agreement. At the signing of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2000 — an agreement that enshrines political, ethnic, regional and gender inclusiveness — women participated actively, and their recommendations were taken into account. For example, in the context of the integration of women in the process of social, economic and political development, the Burundian Constitution grants a minimum quota of 30 per cent for women in the highest levels of decision-making. Thus, since 2005, women have been at the forefront of reforms in the country. Some 44 per cent of the members of Burundi's Parliament are women, and 43 per cent of Government ministers are women occupying significant posts.

Burundi's good experience in that respect shows today that the contributions of women in reconstruction and peacebuilding processes are crucial in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in post-conflict reconstruction. We must therefore consider them as full partners in the formal and informal processes of conflict resolution and peace negotiations. We can refer to an example of mobilization very close to us, namely, the meeting of women's organizations in the Great Lakes region, which was held in Bujumbura in July 2013, within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, whose headquarters are located in my country, Burundi.

Finally, my country would once again emphasize the great importance it attaches to the role of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and reiterates at the same time its strong commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. It will continue to attach particular importance to the situation of girls and women who are refugees and displaced. Of course, we eagerly await the results of the independent review commissioned by the Secretary-General on the state of implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which was adopted almost 15 years ago.