

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

Statement by Mr. Thomson, Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations

Thank you for the welcome, Madam President; it is an honour to share the graveyard shift with you this evening. I believe I am the last speaker. I join with others in thanking you for convening this debate. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), adopted 14 years ago, along with subsequent resolutions affirm that women's participation in conflict prevention, mitigation and recovery is imperative for the maintenance of international peace and security. Resolution 1325 (2000) also highlights the focus of our discussions today, notably that women and girls in displaced groups are subject to violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Fiji delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 2122 (2013) by the Council last October. That important step builds on the previous momentum by incorporating essential accountability checks that aim to change the business-as-usual approach. We urge the Council to continue such a progressive approach so that women's peace and security issues remain at the forefront.

The exponential increase in the global number of displaced people is a matter of great concern. Tragically, over 50 million people are currently displaced, the highest number since the Second World War. The record shows that women and girls in such situations are the most vulnerable groups, often becoming victims of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse. In the context of prolonged and repeated displacement, effective mechanisms to prevent abuse and violence are often absent or limited. Therefore, guaranteed access to legal and justice systems for displaced women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings is crucial in order to ensure that their vital needs are addressed. We must redouble our efforts to implement the relevant legislation, reinforce the rule of law and ensure the protection of victims, witnesses and justice officials so as to safeguard displaced victims, particularly the most vulnerable women and girls.

Often, displaced women and girl survivors who have experienced violence, sexual exploitation and abuse suffer from stigmatization, social shunning and reprisals from within their communities. Therefore, the provision of critical support services, such as psychological support, mental health support and the provision of health care services, is essential for their social rehabilitation.

In tandem with current efforts by the United Nations to mainstream gender within the United Nations system, Fiji is endeavouring to make its contribution to that global effort. Fiji is committed to the alignment of policies so as to provide its best gender-sensitized peacekeepers in helping to rebuild post conflict communities. We recognize that national implementation will be crucial in meeting the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000).

The involvement of women in peace and security requires a multidimensional approach, and Fiji is guided by the regional action plan on women and peace and security, which supports our national efforts to ensure that women are active participants at all stages of national life, including conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. In that respect, the Fiji Constitution of 2013 encompasses a comprehensive range of human rights, including the right to freedom from unfair discrimination based on sex or gender. On the eve of International Women's Day this year, Fiji launched its

national gender policy, which has become the guiding document for mainstreaming gender issues across all sectors and within all spheres of national life. Fiji is committed to increasing women's participation in decision-making in political, social and economic processes at all levels.

In the context of the Pacific Islands, the issue of climate change and the associated calamities of sea-level rise and the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, has resulted in disproportionately high financial, political and social costs for our developing island States. It is widely accepted that the first to bear the negative impacts of climate change are vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls. Climate change not only affects our land and food resources, but the resulting sea-level rise also forces the displacement of our coastal communities. We urge the Security Council to accept that climate change is a security issue and that vigilance must be applied to ensure that vulnerable women and girls are safeguarded.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that progress has been made by countries in the implementation of the resolution; however, it is undeniable there is still so much more to be achieved so as to ensure that the dignity, peace and security of women is realized globally. The Fiji delegation calls on the United Nations system and its agencies, in partnership with Member States and regional organizations, to support the development and implementation of national action plans so that greater progress can be achieved.