

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

Statement by Mr. Delattre, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

I wish to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate. I would also like to warmly thank for their briefings the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Edmond Mulet; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Mr. Chaloka Beyani; and Ms. Suaad Allami, a defender of human rights in Iraq. Their commitment is a source of inspiration and has won admiration from us all.

The topic of women in conflict is a high priority for France, as demonstrated by the presence among us of a large delegation of French senators. I would like to welcome and to thank them for their active commitment to this issue.

In addressing the challenges posed by today's topic, we must be demanding and ambitious. The high-level review of sanctions, which is drawing to a close, the high-level review of peacekeeping missions, which is beginning, and the high-level review for resolution 1325 (2000), which has been announced, are all opportunities to advance the women and peace and security agenda. It is a cross-cutting priority that concerns nearly 80 per cent of Council resolutions, and therefore deserves the same attention as other topics related to peace and security. Women — and we cannot overstress this — are key players in the maintenance of peace and security, not just for the Council but also through peace negotiations or within peacekeeping operations. We will continue to emphasize that to the United Nations mediators, especially with respect to Syria. In that context, I wish to welcome the adoption by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support of the gender strategy for 2014-2018, as well as the activities of UN-Women in that regard. I also welcome the adoption of an ambitious presidential statement (S/PRST/2014/21), thanks to the efforts of the United Kingdom.

The attention paid by the United Nations to women's issues should also be felt on the ground, including in countries in conflict. We too often hear that, in times of crisis or emergencies, security issues take precedence over those for women. However, there can be no security and peace without the security and protection of women, in particular the most vulnerable — those who are forcibly displaced. Violence and human rights violations committed against women refugees or displaced women cannot be considered inevitable as collateral damage to conflict. That is unacceptable. Those violations are too numerous, frequent and intolerable to be minimized or to take a back seat in the Council's concerns.

The upheavals of the global security environment with the rise of violent extremism and terrorism and the implosion of States or health challenges, like Ebola, have contributed to an unprecedented level of forced displacement — unprecedented since the Second World War. Around 32,000 persons were internally displaced every day in 2013. Three quarters of them

were women and children. In Syria and Iraq, the year 2013 was characterized by a dramatic increase in violations — rapes, forced early marriages, prostitution and forced labour were daily occurrences in the lives of women and girls in regions controlled by Daesh. The actions of human rights advocates, such as those of Ms. Suaad Allami in Iraq, become even more critical.

In Syria, the persecution of women by the regime, the bombing of civilian areas by the Syrian army and the multiple restrictions placed on the most basic economic and social rights endanger the survival of whole families and cause 2.5 million refugees to take to the road, over three quarters of whom are women and children. Women who have fled are all the more vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, sex trafficking, domestic violence and poverty. Access to gynaecological and health care becomes very difficult. To try to meet the needs of women in the region, since 2013 France has been supporting local non-governmental organization projects to provide aid to Syrian women who are displaced within Syria or have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including psychological or medical support for victims of sexual violence. We regret, once again, that the French draft resolution that would have referred those crimes to the International Criminal Court was not adopted. In the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan, massive displacements of populations have led to the increased vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence and all forms of violence committed by armed forces and groups. Deploying a gender adviser for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) represents a step forward in the fight against sexual violence.

France, which has mobilized along those lines for MINUSCA, requests that all resolutions establishing or extending peacekeeping operations include relevant provisions for the protection and participation of women. We must also ensure that missions report on violations in their reports, as we recall the case of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in the Sudan.

The armed forces and groups in countries in conflict are a daily threat to women and girls who are refugees or have been displaced. In that context, the entry into force in December of the Arms Trade Treaty is a crucial step. France calls for the full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, including the provision on gender, so as to better take into account the risk of the use of arms against women and children.

It is essential that the rights of refugee and displaced women be guaranteed in all phases of their displacement, whether in camps or outside them. Unfortunately, various services remain unattainable for refugees and displaced women and children. Furthermore, severe insecurity in some camps, for example in South Sudan, prevents women from accessing basic services such as water and food, while other services remain inaccessible.

In terms of access to education, too often the path to school is too dangerous for girls, who are therefore fewer than boys in attending school in times of conflict. As for access to health services, few displaced or refugee women have the right to sexual and reproductive health services. In that context, we welcome the work of the United Nations Population Fund in providing reproductive health services to more than 67,000 people in Syria. Finally, it is crucial that refugee and displaced women have access to justice, which, as we know, remains the lynchpin of any post-conflict stabilization effort.

National Governments bear the primary responsibility for prosecuting and punishing perpetrators of sexual violence. However, when States fail in that responsibility the International Criminal Court (ICC) must play its role. The Court has been seized of cases in Darfur, the Central African Republic, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the open debate of 23 October that was organized by the Argentine presidency (see S/PV.7285) the importance of effective follow-up to the Court's decisions was underscored.

France welcomes the regular exchanges between the Court and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We encourage deeper exchanges and urge the reports of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to take fully into account judicial developments.

France will continue to mobilize to combat impunity in cases of perpetrators of violence against women through the ICC and national tribunals and through the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda as a cross-cutting priority of the Council. That is our joint responsibility. The Council can count on France to remain on the front line of that fight.