

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

Statement by Ms. Bolaños Pérez, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this open debate on a topic of such relevance to the work of the Council. We also thank the main briefers for their participation and invaluable presentations.

We note the report of the Secretary-General which is the basis for our discussions (S/2014/693) and express our special appreciation to the Republic of Argentina for the lucid concept note prepared for this annual meeting on women and peace and security (S/2014/693, annex). We also welcome the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2014/21 this morning.

Today's debate gives us the opportunity to consider the comprehensive implementation of the important resolution 1325 (2000), given our firm belief in the essential role women have to play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts; promoting justice and reconciliation; supporting demobilization, disarmament and reintegration; and rebuilding national institutions, all of which are essential pillars for building a lasting peace.

It is undeniable that women and girls suffer the most devastating effects that come with conflict, in particular the increasingly widespread use of gender-based violence, rape, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, forced pregnancies resulting from these deplorable acts, and stigmatization in their communities. All of these aspects affect their mental and emotional stability and even threaten their lives.

All assistance provided to such women and girls must take into account the trauma they have suffered and continue to suffer as displaced persons, through flashbacks, constant rejection and prolonged family separation. There is therefore a major need for counselling, but the road towards recovery also requires efforts to restore normalcy to their lives. This includes a job and the dignity won by earning one's own money and the freedom to spend it, and education for one's children, which in turn holds the promise of a better future.

It should be underscored that a child's ability to attend school, even in a bombed building or a refugee camp, symbolizes having a system, a routine and a path towards normalcy — recovering from and overcoming trauma. Women should be empowered from girlhood, with access to education, the certainty that their rights are protected and promoted, and the knowledge that they are part of any process affecting their welfare and future.

We will not rest until we see the special needs of women and girls on the ground receiving the special and privileged attention they deserve, with the active collaboration of the relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and Member States, with the support of non-governmental organizations and civil society. In this context, my delegation would like to

acknowledge the important work of UN-Women and the progress achieved to date in mainstreaming gender throughout all activities on the ground of United Nations missions. We urge them to continue their valuable contribution to the challenges at hand.

In the light of the fact that human rights abuses and violations — including discrimination, sexual violence and gender-based violence — can occur at various stages of the displacement cycle, the primary challenge for Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian actors face is the need to ensure and improve a protective environment for displaced persons. We reiterate that it is the responsibility of Member States to protect their populations, in particular displaced women and girls, who are the most vulnerable.

In order to protect and improve the rights of displaced women and integrate a rights-based approach into national governance structures, there is a need to step up the capacity-building of public institutions, which often lie broken or weakened following a conflict. This means ensuring that the practice of protection is more consistent and effective; training national security forces and raising their awareness; supporting local civil society groups working on human rights and the protection of displaced women; and advocating for the rights of displaced women with relevant stakeholders.

We agree with the report of the Secretary-General that the process of strategic reviews of United Nations peacekeeping operations and sanctions and, in turn, the review the peacebuilding architecture should guarantee the inclusion of the commitments and priorities of the women and peace and security agenda. The use of gender- and age-disaggregated data remains indispensable to ensure adequate attention is given to protecting the human rights of women and girls, promoting their empowerment and effectively implementing activities that will lead to the full application of resolution 1325 (2000) and full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

In conclusion, let me underscore how important it is that gender equality and the empowerment of women be placed at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda, and that that goal should put an emphasis on building peaceful societies and institutions, both of which are central for realizing the commitments undertaken on women and peace and security.