

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

*Statement by Mr. Nduhungerehe, Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations.*

I join others, Madam President, in thanking you for organizing this open debate on women and peace and security — Displaced women and girls: leaders and survivors, on the occasion of the fourteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The choice of that specific topic is a demonstration of your continued commitment to the protection and promotion of women and girls in conflicts and post-conflict situations. I also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, and Ms Suaad Allami of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their insightful remarks.

The importance that Rwanda attaches to this debate derives from our own experience, as many Rwandans were deprived of the right to live in their country for around 35 years, owing to exclusion and bad governance. Rwandans lived for many years in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, and many witnessed how women and girls were particularly vulnerable. Fortunately, our efforts to restore the country after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis has paid off, and from 1994 to 2013 over 3.4 million Rwandan refugees, a majority of whom were women and girls, returned home and were successfully reintegrated into the society. On 30 June 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) invoked the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees. Following that decision, Rwanda continued to mobilize and facilitate the return of the remaining 100,000 refugees, as per UNHCR statistics. In that respect, we have continued to work with UNHCR to accelerate the full implementation of the cessation clause, so that all Rwandans can enjoy the right to their country.

At the same time, we are concerned at the fate of women, men and children that are still being held as hostages and used as human shields by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) for the past 20 years. We hope that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will ensure that they return home, as more than 10,000 already have done since 2001, in accordance with resolutions 2098 (2013) and 2147 (2014).

As the concept note (S/2014/731, annex) that you have prepared for this debate recalls, Madam President, the current numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have never been higher since the Second World War — more than 50 million by the end of 2013, many more since 2014, with 32,000 forcibly displaced people daily, half of them women and girls. It is clear, as the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg reminded us, that the situation of forced displacement exacerbates the existing

vulnerability of women and girls, since they, more than anyone else, are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence, to trafficking and enslavement, to exclusion based on historical and cultural traditions, and they have specific health needs. Furthermore, many women who have lost their husbands in conflicts face social and economic challenges, as a number of them are uneducated and they must take responsibility for their households.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) in October 2000, however, there has been notable progress in the advancement of the agenda of women and peace and security, which has become one of the priorities of the Council, as demonstrated by country-specific and thematic resolutions that we have been adopting since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Member States, including my own, are also at the forefront of that issue, as many of them have adopted national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000), and have endorsed a declaration of commitment to end sexual violence in conflict.

As for the African Union, our continental organization, as recalled by the representative of Nigeria, it adopted a landmark document in 2009, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention, which Rwanda has ratified. The Convention imposes a number of obligations on States parties related to general and specific protection of women and girls, including protection against sexual and gender-based violence, and to reproductive and sexual health. Given that background, we can say that the world is equipped with a comprehensive legal and normative framework for the effective protection of women and girls, including in the case of forced displacement.

Despite local, national, regional and global efforts to protect women refugees and IDPs, there is still a gap between the framework and its effective implementation. The theme you proposed for this debate, Madam President, invites us to discuss the issue of “Displaced women and girls: leaders and survivors”. Those two notions — leaders and survivors — are complementary, as both protection and promotion are indispensable for an effective implementation of our policies. Indeed, the protection of women and girls, in case of forced displacement, requires our resolve, as we must effectively protect them from sexual and gender-based violence in refugee and IDP camps, and ensure that those who are sexually-abused benefit from medical services, including health and psychological care.

One of the practical steps to achieve that goal includes the increased deployment of women peacekeepers. That will, of course, be possible with the increased training and recruitment of women into national armies and police. It will also require a greater commitment on the part of Member States to appoint women peacekeepers, including in leadership positions, as well as women protection advisors. Another practical measure for the protection of women, as suggested by Mr. Beyani, is to prevent women from venturing outside refugee and IDP camps to collect firewood for cooking. In that regard, Rwandan peacekeepers in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur brought improved energy-saving

cooking stoves to Darfur, which were introduced in Rwanda in 2000 in order to preserve trees. We believe that those cooking stoves are critical, not only to protect the environment, but also to protect women refugees and IDPs. However, no protection measures will be effective if they are not accompanied by our collective resolve to hold the perpetrators of sexual violence and other mass atrocities accountable.

Furthermore, the protection of women refugees and IDPs must go hand in hand with the promotion of their empowerment. That requires our collective efforts to promote the education of girls, and I take this opportunity, as Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka did earlier, to pay tribute to Malala Yousafzai, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this month.

Women's empowerment should also be reflected not only in the Council but also in other leading positions, such as the Government and Parliament. Indeed, that measure would not only reflect the actual representativity of women in our societies but also enable them to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues in our laws, including those related to economic, human rights and humanitarian issues.

As the representative of the United Kingdom said — and I thank him for introducing presidential statement S/PRST/2014/21, just adopted — the best protection of women internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees is to ensure that they do not become refugees and IDPs in the first place. As Rwanda has always said, the Security Council needs to shift its attention from the day-to-day management of conflicts and their consequences to their prevention, including by addressing their root causes.

Let me conclude by noting that 2015 will be the year of a triple review: the peacekeeping review, the peacebuilding review and the high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000). We hope that all those reviews will be complementary and lead to a better protection and promotion of women's rights, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations. Our country is ready to share its experience and to further contribute to a world where women and girls are not only protected but also empowered to become the leaders that they deserve to be.