

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

Statement by Mrs. Carrion, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations

My delegation would like to commend you, Madam President, for convening this debate. We express our appreciation to all those who work daily to promote peace and security, especially women. I also wish to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and Mr. Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for their presentations.

The focus of today's debate, "Displaced women and girls: leaders and survivors", could not have been more timely, now when we are seeing the number of displaced persons rise to alarming proportions and mass violence and humanitarian disasters continue to get worse in various parts of the world. According to the Global Trends report prepared annually by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of displaced people had reached 51.2 million by late 2013.

The Uruguayan Government has taken steps to provide a humanitarian response in the crisis being experienced by refugees from the conflict in Syria by undertaking to host 120 Syrian refugees. Five families, including 33 children, have already reached our country.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the women and peace and security agenda has noticeably advanced in both breadth and depth. It now occupies a recognized place among the set of legal instruments, policies and concrete actions of the Organization, championing the importance of the gender perspective in all conflict situations, especially in rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction. In that regard, the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/693) lists a number of accomplishments in 2013, such as the adoption of two new Security Council resolutions, the declaration by the Peacebuilding Commission on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding, and the inclusion of a provision on gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty, among others.

We welcome that progress. Unfortunately, despite the legal and policy developments, we as a troop-contributing country can attest that in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, civilians, particularly women and girls, remain the main victims in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. In particular, we note with deep concern the violence against certain groups of people and violations of the human rights of women and girls arising from terrorism, transnational organized crime and extremism. In that regard, we agree with the Secretary-General when he notes the challenge of implementing and sustaining progress in all measures and standards relating to women and peace and security.

Prevention is a cornerstone of the women and peace and security agenda. In particular, the prevention of sexual violence in conflicts is a priority to which my country gives special attention. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Uruguay has deployed some 1,000 troops to fulfil many tasks in the protection of civilians, joint protection teams are used to monitor and address violations of human rights in remote areas. Our troops conduct patrols to prevent the rape of

women and girls in remote places, such as when they go to fetch water, and have successfully prevented and deterred potential aggression.

The vulnerability to sexual or gender-based violence experienced by refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless persons and the internally displaced during conflict, flight and displacement is alarming. The international community should give serious consideration to effective ways to prevent that. We also emphasize the need for greater attention to the rehabilitation of victims of grave violations and the reinstatement of their rights, particularly in cases of sexual abuse or exploitation. We believe activities to combat impunity are important, including the appointment of specialists to investigate sexual and gender-based crimes.

Finally, we think it is important to ensure strict adherence to the code of conduct by all those participating in United Nations contingents deployed on ground, based on the zero-tolerance policy. The participation of women in all aspects of the peace and security agenda is also extremely important. It is clear that there is a link between the participation of women in decision-making and the enjoyment of their human rights. Therefore it is fundamental to increase their participation and leadership in the context of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Although the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2014/693) the trend, particularly from 2010, of increasing participation by women in all processes, including the appointment of women as mediators and envoys, we think that we are still far from achieving the desired goal. Moreover, we share the idea expressed in the report that improving the protection of women and girls will require more women police and military personnel.

Uruguay has been in the vanguard when it comes to incorporating women into the armed forces, and that is reflected in the number of women deployed by the armed forces and the national police in the Uruguayan contingents in the peacekeeping missions. Women always participate on a volunteer basis and have acquitted themselves in an outstanding manner, with interesting repeat figures that demonstrate their commitment to the objectives of those missions. However, we note with concern the data published in the report that indicates that as of March 2014, 97 per cent of military personnel and 90 per cent of police in peacekeeping operations were men. That percentage has not changed since 2011.

Uruguay believes that the women and peace and security agenda is a fundamental part of the broader agenda linked with children in armed conflicts and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. It is therefore fundamental to make progress in a coordinated way, achieving synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts and making the most effective use possible of the instruments that this Organization has on the ground. We think that many of the limitations can be corrected with clear, predictable strategies, appropriate for each mission, and with better coordination among the different actors on ground — especially with the host country, which has primary responsibility for protection.