

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

Statement by Ms. Jones, Permanent Mission of the United States to the United Nations.

I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for this important meeting. I would also like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Mr. Edmond Mulet, Mr. Chaloka Beyani and Ms. Suaad Allami for their briefings, their dedication to the peace and security of women around the world, and their courage. We also welcome the adoption today of the presidential statement contained in document S/PRST/2014/21.

The issue of women and peace and security has captured our attention anew as violent extremist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) conduct targeted attacks against women and girls daily in Iraq and Syria. That terrorist group brazenly takes credit for the abduction, enslavement, rape, forced marriage and sale of several thousand Yazidi and other minority women and girls, rationalizing that abhorrent treatment by claiming falsely and outrageously that such acts are sanctioned by religion. ISIL tortured and then publicly executed Iraqi human rights defender Samira Salih al-Nuaimi for bravely speaking out against the group, even in the face of repeated threats to her life. Just last week, another Syrian woman was stoned to death. We strongly condemn the treatment of women and children as spoils of war and their subjection to horrific physical and sexual violence, intimidation and deprivation of liberty.

For the United States, focusing on the issue of women and peace and security through the lens of forced displacement is particularly appropriate. Forced displacement has reached an unprecedented level. Some 51.2 million people, 80 per cent of them women and children, were displaced by the end of 2013. This crisis cannot be solved without holistically addressing and integrating the four women and peace and security pillars — protection, participation, conflict prevention and relief and recovery — into the work of the Council as we seek to fulfil our mandate to foster peace and security.

I should like to focus on three elements: participation, access to health and education, and economic opportunity and the rule of law.

Participation means more than just voting or going to school. We need more women leaders at the national and local levels represented throughout various sectors of society — women like Claudia Paz y Paz, the first woman Attorney General of Guatemala, or women like those in the Second Peshmerga Battalion, an all-female battalion fighting on the front lines against ISIL. Major General Kristin Lund was the first woman appointed to command a United Nations peacekeeping force, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, bringing the United Nations closer to its goal this year of including more women in peacekeeping missions and leadership positions.

The participation of women as political leaders is vital, yet the percentage of female parliament members globally remains static at below 22 per cent. There are some bright spots. Nearly 3,000 women candidates ran in Iraqi elections this year — the greatest number ever to do so there. But as the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/693) points out, election-related violence against women remains a serious concern, as does women's freedom of

political participation. There was a horrifying string of sexual assaults on women during Egypt's inaugural celebrations for its new president, including a mass attack on a 19-year-old student, who was stripped in Cairo's Tahrir Square. In the Horn of Africa, deadly attacks on parliamentarians in Somalia, including women, must stop.

We have seen that the meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making, programme design and implementation, and leadership is critical in humanitarian crises. Just as important is the sense of empowerment that women experience because they are given a role in decision-making on issues that affect lives. In Nepal, local women's organizations built responsive programmes by consulting Bhutanese refugee women with disabilities on effective gender-based violence programmes. That led to the creation of vocational training classes that better suited their needs and significantly improved their lives.

But to participate and show leadership, women need to be healthy and educated. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, maternal mortality rates in conflict and post-conflict countries are 60 per cent higher than the global rates. Access to health and education services is even more essential for displaced communities. That includes women such as those in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, who face desperate conditions and limited access to food, safe water and medical supplies. Less than two weeks ago, the International Committee of the Red Cross was able to deliver medical aid to Yarmouk for the first time in a year. The hospital there is no longer able to provide the emergency medical treatment required for women and newborns. There has been an increase in miscarriages due to food shortages and poor nutrition for pregnant women and due to the collapse of prenatal care under the siege.

Education can mitigate the effects of conflict and provide the basis for long-term economic growth and stability. Education services for women and girls in conflict-affected settings are essential. The United States is working to increase equal access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015. For example, in the Darfuri refugee camps in Chad, we are ensuring that secondary education programmes are accessible to boys and girls alike.

At the same time, we need to continue to strive to break multigenerational cycles of poverty and we must therefore focus on equipping young girls with the tools necessary to escape need. The United States is taking action. On 9 October, we announced an initial funding of \$29 million for the SPRING Initiative, a partnership with the United Kingdom Government and the Nike Foundation aimed at accelerating the economic empowerment of girls. The Initiative will help businesses bring to market products that enable girls to learn, earn, invest and save, thereby improving the lives of up to 200,000 girls over the next five years and, we hope, millions more by 2030.

If women are to play their rightful role in every society and culture, equal protection under the law through institutional and structural reforms is essential. That means making sure that women know their rights and have real and practical access to justice and that those who target women are held to account in credible and transparent processes. That is true not just with respect to violence and abuse. In some societies, women often become family breadwinners but lack the same rights and freedoms as male heads of household. At a time when the world is becoming increasingly aware of radicalized young people joining violent

extremist groups, that imbalance must be addressed. Young people who have grown up with strong female role models and outside of poverty are less likely to embrace extremism. One way to address such challenges is to bolster funding for projects that support women's empowerment. Such investments can support crisis recovery and stability by enabling women to contribute economically to their families and their communities. We urge Member States to invest seriously in those efforts, particularly in programmes that support female-led households in displacement and post-conflict settings. In a similar vein, unequal citizenship laws make women and their children more vulnerable. While many Member States, in line with resolution 2122 (2013), are reforming laws that discriminate against women in nationality matters, at least 25 countries maintain laws that do not allow women to confer nationality on their children.

To conclude, we have done a lot, since the Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) 14 years ago, to advance the role of women in peace and security. I mentioned some of the areas in which we still need to make progress to protect women and girls and to empower them to reach their full potential. This is a vital and cross-cutting issue in all of the Council's work. Against that backdrop, the United States welcomes the 2015 high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) as an opportunity to assess current programming, identify implementation gaps and address emerging problems. Considering that the review will run concurrently with our own national action plan review in 2015, we hope that the processes will complement and support each other, reminding us how far we have come and of how much remains to be done.

As Secretary Kerry said at a summit on the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative in London in June, no society will know peace if it leaves half its population behind. Women's voices are a critical part of coming to terms with the past by investing in a shared future that rejects conflict and promotes dignity. Countless women have been subjected to rape and sexual violence as tactics of war. Now we must enlist all women and empower them as agents of peace.