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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**ON
“WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY”**

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Mr President,

It gives me great pleasure to see you preside over the Council at this, our third open debate on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the role of women in peace-building.

My delegation would wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his contribution to the debate and for his Report on Women, Peace and Security as contained in Document S/2002/1154. In addition, the contributions to this report and presentations on this important topic by the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms Angela King, the Executive Director of UNIFEM, Ms Noeleen Heyzer and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, should be commended.

My delegation also fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Mr President,

Africa remains a continent that is suffering from widespread problems, including armed conflicts, extensive poverty, the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, food shortages, drought and humanitarian disasters.

In Africa, enhanced efforts are being made to achieve peace, democracy and development. With the launch of the African Union (AU) and its new institutions such as a Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the African Peer Review Mechanism, African leaders have acknowledged the need to strengthen the mechanisms necessary to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and ensuring accountability and transparency of African governments.

South Africa, in addition, has embarked on peace-brokering efforts to find durable solutions to the human suffering of citizens, in particular women and girls, highlighted by the interventions of President Thabo Mbeki, as chairperson of the African Union.

As an African state, South Africa plays its modest role in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the peace process is advancing at an accelerated pace with our facilitation of the Pretoria Agreement of 30 July 2002, between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As required by the Pretoria Agreement, South Africa is working with the United Nations to monitor and guarantee the implementation thereof.

Another related matter is the signing of the Luanda Agreement by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda under the facilitation of the Government of Angola.

Mr President,

The African Union (AU) acknowledges that special attention should be paid to women in view of their role and potential contribution in the peace process. It is against this background that the African Women Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD) was established in 1998, by the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to ensure the participation of African women in decision-making and related initiatives. The Committee also serves as an advisory body to the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) on issues relating to gender, peace, security, stability and development in Africa, and works closely with the AU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution.

As an example, the African Union, the African Women Committee for Peace and Development and associated organizations, organized a Solidarity Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December 2001 to support the women in their preparations for effective participation in the Inter-Congolese dialogue hosted in South Africa early in 2002.

Mr President,

As we enter the new millennium, we are mindful that while there is much hope for the regeneration of our continent in the context of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa has a lot of work to do.

One of the most critical of these challenges is to bring an end to the civil wars and conflicts that have ravaged our continent. We should aspire to have a genuine integration of all peoples, and more especially women, into the new era of peace, reconstruction and development on the continent. This is, however, easily said and much more difficult to implement.

Women have learned through the hard years of struggle in South Africa, that it is absolutely necessary for women to organise around their needs and their interests. Apartheid encouraged the oppressed to organise themselves - in trade unions, youth movements, women's movements and civic organizations. It required determination, and it took a great deal of courage and suffering. The important lesson was that even during the darkest days of the fight against repression, women's actions were fuelled by a vision of a democratic and free non-racial South Africa. As women were drawn into the struggle in different ways, their participation gave them confidence that they too could enjoy full equality alongside men. This battle for equality was what women have come to refer to as a 'struggle within a struggle'. Fortunately, at the political level, South African women succeeded.

Mr President,

Many studies on conflict, peace and post-war reconstruction, have shown that if women, wherever they are, whether in armies, in refugee camps, in exile, in civic communities, in rural or urban areas, are organised politically, they are able to enter the national processes of peace-making and decision-making, more effectively. They do not wait politely to be invited, but demand to be incorporated into these processes. They do not cease organising themselves once the negotiations start. In fact, this is phase for renewed organisational interventions by women. This is the time for women to form united coalitions around the needs and interests of women and girls in their particular countries.

But this is also the time when women and girls face danger. In conflict situations, women and girls become the targets of renewed gender based violence - in their homes and in the streets. Women's experience of war is one of physical and emotional abuse as well as extreme forms of violence that target their sexuality. Rape and other forms of sexual assault are used as weapons of war, to undermine the integrity of women, to turn their men and society against them, and to sully their 'honour'. In addition, women as mothers and wives suffer the pain of losing their sons and husbands.

Another danger faced by women is during the transition period from war to peace, when demobilisation of armies and militarised personnel take place. At a time of tension, roles are defined by the masculinity of war with little emphasis on the human rights of women and girls. This approach during periods of cease-fire and transition is not easily resolved, especially if the conflict has been brutal.

Women in addition, bear a double burden during conflict and its aftermath since during the absence of their husbands and sons, women take on more responsibilities. Men come home to reassert what they perceive to be their traditional roles and patriarchal powers. This causes tension and often violence in the home and illustrates how inequalities in power relations between men and women mean that the gains made by women often constitute losses for men. This scenario is a true experience of women in many African countries.

Mr President,

The goals outlined in NEPAD are consistent with the UN Millennium Development Goals. For example, both prioritised combating HIV/AIDS and promoting girls' education as priorities, and if successfully implemented through strategies such as NEPAD, would be powerful examples of successes to follow in Africa. The empowerment and education of women and girls enable them to become part of the future of their countries. It has the potential to elevate girls, later in their careers and personal lives, to advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, particularly in situations of armed conflict, and it brings them into the sphere of playing a role in peace-

building efforts.

In this regard, during the past two years, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women organised seminars in the sub-region to enhance women's capacities and skills in participating in negotiations and peace-building in Africa. This was a fruitful venture as our women reported to have long been seeking guidance and special expertise to enable them to make critical interventions within their specific countries in order to prevent and manage conflicts.

Mr President,

The gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution cannot be overlooked. Women play a critical role in addressing peace and security issues. A conscious effort is needed by Member States to ensure women's negotiation skills are utilised. It is necessary to recognise that the objective of this debate is to work towards a society in which everyone has a role to play in creating new democratic institutions. This means insisting that there is a new partnership between men and women for peace, security and development. This partnership should be mainstreamed at all levels of society and in government or state institutions. It is also a partnership with non-governmental organizations and civil society to advocate the importance of the role women play in times of conflicts.

We should be doing this in the strong belief that the enjoyment of human rights, freedom, peace, stability and development should be extended to our brothers, sisters and children on the continent. We believe that in urging all Africans to play their part in ending the mayhem and destruction in some parts of the continent, we are contributing to the success of the newly established African Union and to the achievement of the goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In this regard, the mandate that the Security Council has provided in Resolution 1325, namely to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, is of particular importance.

Mr President,

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear that the Security Council and indeed all relevant organs of the United Nations, and Member States must join in a co-operative venture to face the challenges of armed conflict and global security. Women's voices and their influence in peace, security, democracy, training and development, at the national and international level, will prove to the benefit of all.

The report of the Secretary-General is testimony to our collective and unwavering resolve to implement Resolution 1325 (2000). My delegation believes the twenty-one actions as highlighted in the Report will serve as a useful guide in order to eliminate the untold suffering of women and girls

caught-up in armed conflict and in ensuring the active participation of women in peace processes.

Women deserve to be victors with men in building peace and security.

Thank you