

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations, October 18th, 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Grunditz, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Nordic Countries

I am pleased to address the Council on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Azerbaijani presidency for organizing this open debate, and to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN Women, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and in particular Ms. Brigitte Balipou of the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security for their valuable statements.

The Nordic countries strongly welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/525) and the adoption of resolution 2122 (2013) on women, peace and security. We commend the Council for the progress made and trust that the new resolution will enhance a more rapid, complete and systematic implementation of all the resolutions on this matter.

We welcome the focus of this debate on the rights, perspectives and participation of women in the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict-affected situations. The rule of law is an integral part of the engagement for peace and security. The Nordic countries have a strong commitment to the rule of law and to its main principles of legality, equality, accountability and participation.

We firmly believe that the rule of law must encompass the whole population — women and men, boys and girls — if it is to be worthy of its name. Nevertheless, women's perspectives, capacities and needs continue to be overlooked in efforts to establish the rule of law in conflict or post-conflict contexts. To promote the rule of law while excluding women is not only a paradox; it undermines the achievement of sustainable peace and security.

Safeguarding women's access to justice, applying a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice mechanisms and including women in post-conflict reparations programmes are paramount steps in the establishment of the rule of law, and thus paramount to peace and security. The campaign to improve women's access to justice must therefore include a scrutiny of the systemic barriers of gender inequality, including economic empowerment, women's citizenship rights, their legal capacity, property rights, as well as safe transportation and safe access to witnesses and victim protection programmes. In order to play a role, women must also have access to their basic rights in all phases of conflict. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's call for expanded access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Conflict-related gender-based crimes must be investigated. Resolution 2106 (2013) and the recent Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict are two vital steps towards fulfilling our obligations. We fully support the work of Justice Rapid Response and its partnership with UN Women in addressing sexual and gender-based violence. However, let us underline that gender justice is not merely about women's needs as victims, but also about women's valuable contributions to bringing about peace and their participation at the forefront of transitional justice and in rule of law measures, such as justice system reform.

At the strategic level, gender awareness in the rule of law and transitional justice is crucial for women's access to justice and for the enjoyment of rights. It has a direct impact on their political and economic empowerment. A systematic follow-up to ensure the inclusion of the women, peace and security agenda in the day to day work of the Council is therefore necessary. The number, influence and leadership of women in conflict-resolution and in post-conflict governance and peacekeeping must increase.

The Nordic countries support and encourage the findings in the progress report by UN Women to be moved forward, alongside the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report. We applaud the efforts of the regional and subregional organizations to implement resolution 1325 (2000), and we commend the ongoing work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) membership to adopt an OSCE-wide action plan.

We welcome the fact that the recently concluded Arms Trade Treaty includes a legally-binding provision on gender-based violence and a call for a full implementation of the Treaty's provision on preventing gender-based violence and violence against women and girls when assessing arms transfers.

We pay tribute to the work of civil society to promote gender equality and women's role in conflict resolution and in conflict prevention. Let us not forget that the very origin of resolution 1325 (2000) derives from the tireless and courageous efforts of women's NGOs. We must continue to support and encourage the women-led civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Finally, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for a 2015 high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and his call for new and ambitious targets.