

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28, 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Borges, Representative of Timor-Leste

Allow me first to thank your delegation, Madam President, for having organized this important open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his participation today. I also thank the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Michelle Bachelet, and the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe, for their informative briefings. I would also like to thank Ms. Orzala Ashraf Nemat from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her contribution today. Timor-Leste welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2011/598*).

Resolution 1325 (2000) represents a watershed moment in the international community's approach to conflict and its resolution. It recognizes the disproportionate impact that conflict has upon women and children, the vital role women play in maintaining and sustaining peace, as well as the need to engage women across all sectors, starting from the very beginning of the peace process. However, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, progress has been both slow and uneven. More than 10 years have passed since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, and efforts to fully implement the resolution must be accelerated in order to protect the most vulnerable groups.

Women's participation in mediation and negotiation is critical and is directly proportionate to the level of rights and opportunities that women experience during peacebuilding. Having women mediators appointed to senior positions at the forefront of international efforts in peacebuilding would send a strong message and would also ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups are not forgotten. Timor-Leste supports the Secretary-General's call that women be appointed to senior mediatory positions.

Timor-Leste recognizes the vital role that women played, both in our independence movement and in their contribution to peace through our nation-building efforts. We are committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. We are currently in the process of drafting a national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). Efforts are already under way to promote that resolution and to raise awareness of gender-based violence, human rights and peacebuilding through the training of women's groups, survivors of violence, men and youth. Community mediators, 50 per cent of whom are women, have been trained to assist in situations involving local conflict. Involving women at the outset has had an exponentially beneficial effect in Timor-Leste and has laid the foundation for women's participation and inclusion, not only in Government, but also across all sectors.

We are proud to note that women's representation in our Parliament is at 29 per cent, and we have set a goal to reach 35 per cent representation by 2015. The recently adopted electoral law requires that every third candidate on party lists be a woman, thereby ensuring that this target will be reached.

UN-Women, together with international partners, has provided great support to our efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. As a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, we are steadfast in our support of the new entity and are confident of the value of its work on the advancement of women. That commitment is further reflected in our three-year contribution to the core budget of UN-Women.

According to the World Bank, women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to be

victims of gender-based violence. Periods of conflict increase the number of those afflicted with long-term physical, mental or sensory impairments, leaving a larger group of women and children who are disabled and often targeted by abuse and violence. In mainstreaming gender into the area of peace and security, the needs of those with disabilities should not be forgotten. Moreover, in creating plans for post- conflict service delivery, it is important to remember that those with disabilities may require different or specialized services, and to plan accordingly. In that regard, it is important that women with disabilities are factored accordingly into national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000).

It is necessary to stress the importance of making resources available to women's organizations, which can be utilized to shed light on the needs of women and children during and after conflict, but also as a tool in peacebuilding. The innovative cross-learning initiative on resolution 1325 (2000) involving Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste is an example of such a dialogue. It was designed to draw upon the experiences of those directly affected by conflict, thereby enabling them to discuss the most critical issues facing women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings, as well as the challenges that remain in post-conflict rebuilding.

Finally, improving coordination and sequencing will enable the United Nations system to address the needs of all women, including those with disabilities, in peace and security. We welcome the formation of the High-level Steering Committee on Women and Peace and Security , and look forward to its work. We are also encouraged by the increase in the number of Security Council reports addressing the issue of women in conflict and post-conflict situations, along with the mission mandate renewal resolutions on that issue. We hope that they will act as an impetus for the delivery of results on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Peace and security measures must be approached with a long-term vision that encompasses prevention, participation and protection. This year's Nobel Peace Prize winners, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Yemeni activist Tawakkul Karman and Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee highlight the important role that women play in the peace process. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the four women peace advocates who were recently presented with the inaugural N-Peace Awards in Asia, including Ms. Filomena Barros dos Reis of Timor-Leste, for their contributions to peacebuilding in their communities at the grass roots and national levels. Let us take inspiration from those women and use their efforts as a catalyst in our efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000).