



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

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Statement by H.E. Mrs. Fekitamueloa 'Utoikamanu

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On Behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS)

Open debate on Women, Peace and Security

Security Council

New York, 29 October 2008

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) comprising Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your strong leadership in convening this Open debate on the theme: "Women, Peace and Security." We also welcome the Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2008/622).

Mr. President,

The security concern for women and children in crisis and conflict situations must be addressed. The lawlessness of many of the post-conflict situations put women and children in both physical and psychological vulnerable situations. Due to the increasing number of civilian-combatants, the line between a soldier in the traditional sense and that of a civilian in combat is not longer as clear cut. The increasing engagement of civilians in conflict situations poses an enormous threat to the security of women and children. Communities that once could be counted on for support during times of conflict are no longer safe with increasing number of members engaging in combat.

In reality, this means women and children find it harder to rely on the safety net they once had, and this reality is further exacerbated in post-conflict situations due to the difficulty to re-integrate civilian-combatant into the community. Many civilian-combatants are rejected by their communities due to the atrocities they have committed during times of conflict, regardless of if it was by choice or whether if it was forced upon them by the army. The community spirit is fragmented and damaged as a result, and in many cases it may seem as irreparable; feelings of hatred, resentment, fear and mistrust become real obstacles in the process of re-integration and the re-building of the communities. The longer the process is delayed, the more women and children suffer due to the lack of leadership and the increasing lawlessness of the situation.

Thus, we would like to urge the UN and Members States to work together and to address the issue of women's participation in peace talks, justice process and peacekeeping efforts. Women and children were often neglected and violated during times war and we must ensure that they exercise their rights to fully participate in the rebuilding of their communities.

Mr. President,

We would like to highlight four points in regards to the strengthening of the implementations of resolutions 1325(2000) and 1820 (2008).

1. The UN system should facilitate support to encourage women's participation in the normative and operational functions of peace keeping. A gender perspective must be integrated into the mainstream efforts of peace keeping to ensure the concerns of women and children are adequately addressed.

2. We support the concept of the establishment of a Gender Unit in the Department of Political Affairs, since the department is instrumental in peace negotiations and manages political missions in country specific situations. The Gender Unit should work closely with other gender focal points in the UN to provide the expertise and the support to the Missions in the fields.
3. We encourage the Women's equal and substantive participation in all levels of peace and security decision making, particularly in the negotiation process and peace talks in post-conflict situations.
4. We further encourage efforts to support the inclusion of women' issues in disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, re-integration, and the resettlement of communities. Women and children have specific needs and vulnerabilities therefore deserve the attention.

Mr President,

In June this year, the Council held an open thematic debate on "women, peace and security: sexual violence in situations of armed conflict." We joined other delegations in supporting the work of the Council in this area. We have also consistently referred to the link between the security implications of climate change, and the impacts the security implications may have on the physical security of women and children.

We would like to reiterate that it is vital to consider the security implications of climate change, and how it may affect the most vulnerable groups of our populations. Climate change is a cross-cutting issue, and it has wide implications beyond the realm of development.

We take note of the recent Congress in the Philippines last month; which brought the much needed attention to the link between gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction. The Congress also adopted a declaration, which raised the concern of the lack of awareness in many countries on these issues and the impacts it has on women.

We urge the international community to join our efforts in recognizing the security implications of climate change, and the implications it has on women and children's security and well-being.

Thank you