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Statement by H.E. Philip Parham
United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations
at the Security Council Open Debate
on
Women, Peace and Security
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Check against delivery

Mr President, I'd like to congratulate you and your delegation on Vietnam's assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month, and I'd like also - through Ambassador di Carlo - to thank the US delegation for a very productive and distinguished Presidency of the Council last month. Ambassador Minh has our best wishes for the often delicate task of presiding over this Council and discerning the balance of views among its members.

I would also like to thank you, Mr President, for personally chairing this debate on a very important issue. I am delighted to welcome you to lead us in this effort.

We have a proverb in the UK - you can wait a long time at a bus stop for a bus to arrive; and then all of a sudden two or three come along at once. Nine years on from the adoption of its landmark resolution 1325, we are glad to see the issue of "Women, peace and security" receiving renewed attention in this chamber, with debates on different aspects two weeks in a row. We have come a long way since 2000. The resolution before us today is an indication that these issues are acknowledged as central to many areas of the Council's work.

But our consideration of these issues has also been prompted by the lack of implementation of 1325. During last week's debate on sexual violence in armed conflict, we again heard heart-breaking and harrowing stories. At an Arria-formula meeting which I chaired in June, we were reminded of the fact that women and women's civil society groups are all but excluded from peace processes and mediation. The Secretary-General's report provides a depressing analysis of the many obstacles and challenges to women's participation.

We are heartened by the excellent effort led by this Secretary-General to address the lack of women in UN senior positions: he himself has appointed three of the nine women who have ever held the post of SRSG, and the numbers of women are growing steadily amongst key UN leadership functions in the field. But there has still never been a female Special Envoy.

Today's debate, however, is about the particular contribution of women to peacebuilding. It is about seizing what has been called the 'golden hour' window of opportunity, at the point of emergence from conflict. The point in time when it is all too easy for a fragile peace to break. The point in time when we must ensure that all actors in society are empowered to contribute fully to the search for sustainable peace. The point in time when women could make such a huge and lasting difference if enabled to do so. The Security Council has agreed that we need to focus more attention on the linkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Ensuring the engagement of the local female population is one obvious such link: empowered women both make peace and build it. (And incidentally, Mr President, this is not a new insight. The playwright Aristophanes dramatised it for war-weary Athenians in his play *Lysistrata* nearly two and half thousand years ago.)

Women have a pivotal role to play. Although often survivors of some of the worst effects of conflict, women are usually relied upon to form the foundation of a post-conflict society. They frequently perform this role with neither say over the peace process nor voice in any post-conflict planning.

In resolution 1888, this Council took further steps to end the impunity for the barbarous perpetrators of sexual violence against women and children in conflict.

We now need to identify practical ways to assure women a central role in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding - that is, we need to improve our record in implementing resolution 1325.

We have one year remaining before the tenth anniversary of that resolution. That will be an important moment for this Council. We will want then to take stock of progress and set an ambitious forward agenda.

To ensure that there will be real progress to take stock of, in the year ahead, we will need to:

First: generate imaginative solutions to the many obstacles to implementation, making use of the whole UN system. We must see linkages across the system and fit responses to the gaps which are identified. The composite UN gender entity will help achieve that goal. In its resolution last month, the General Assembly gave strong support to the establishment of the entity. We hope that will now be taken forward expeditiously.

Second, we must increase the number and standard of national-level implementation strategies, drawing upon peer experience and the excellent examples set recently by Liberia, Uganda and Chile.

And, third, we must finalise and agree indicators to measure progress. We need data on success or failure in implementing specific provisions. We need to know what works and what doesn't.

Today's resolution should help kick-start those efforts.

For our part, the United Kingdom is currently reviewing our National Action Plan for implementation of SCR 1325, to ensure that our policies not only remain consistent with that resolution, but also promote its implementation around the globe. We urge other Member States to do the same.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that a full and effective contribution can be made by women during peace processes, that their needs are met as survivors of conflict, that their voices are heard in local civil society, and that greater numbers of talented women are appointed to senior peacekeeping and peacebuilding positions.

As a Council, we need to ensure that we are doing whatever we can to enhance women's vital role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding – a role without which real and lasting peace will often be unachievable.

Thank you Mr President.