



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security

**Statement by Ines Alberdi
Executive Director, UNIFEM**

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
29 October 2008**

Mr. President, Members of the Security Council,

Thank you for the honor of this invitation to address the Security Council on the issue of women's participation in maintaining and promoting peace and security.

This thematic focus permits us to stress that women's engagement in peace-building does not start when the fighting stops. Gender issues must be addressed in conflict mediation, in the deployment of peacekeepers, in integrated missions, in stabilization and in post-conflict recovery. That is, for women to participate effectively in promoting peace and security, gender-responsive peace-building must begin from the first moments of conflict resolution.

This is particularly important in conflicts in which sexual violence is used as a tactic of war. Unless women's security is a primary objective of peacekeepers, and systematic abuses of women's rights are made a primary focus of judicial responses, the seeds are sown for an incomplete and possibly unsustainable peace. This is because if abuses of women's rights are tolerated through *de facto* impunity for perpetrators, efforts to restore the rule of law lose their credibility.

It is important to note that the Security Council has **decisively acknowledged** this point in Resolution 1820. In recognizing sexual violence as a tactic of war, which is used to crush opposition, subordinate communities, and to silence women, this resolution advances resolution 1325. It acknowledges that there is no security without women's security. If sexual violence is a security problem it requires a *security* response from the earliest moments of peacekeeping.

Other security institutions are making the connections between women's security and peace building. UNIFEM is pleased to have supported a meeting by the French Presidency of the European Union this month to improve the connections between resolutions 1325 and 1820 and improve their implementation in EU security, police, and justice missions.

Mr. President, women's participation in conflict prevention, community reconciliation, and respect for the rule of law cannot be left to a post-conflict phase. It must be addressed from the start. Business as usual will not do.

The rest of my remarks address points at which practices must change in *peacemaking*, *peacekeeping*, and *building sustainable peace*.

Peace Making

The impact of a public physical presence of women in peace processes should not be underestimated. At the EU meeting I referred to, a peace activist from Liberia explained why women need to see women in peace processes and peacekeeping missions at the same level as men, rubbing shoulders with the generals and the mediators: 'It is a sign that women are valued'.

UNIFEM recently reviewed official figures on women's participation in peace talks. While data is hard to obtain, as negotiations are sensitive, we found that women averaged 7 per cent of negotiators in the five comprehensive agreements for which data were available. They averaged 24 per cent of official observers in three recent peace processes for which data were available. They barely number at all among appointed envoys, mediators and facilitators.

This does not tell the whole story of course, since women's peace networks are constantly engaging in peace processes on a more informal basis. An example is the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which UNIFEM supported since 2005. They have developed a shared vision of a resolution to the conflict, but have no means by which to interject this vision into the official process. This illustrates why more rigorous implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 is so important. We are pleased that IWC members are here today and that on Friday, 31 October, they will participate in an informal briefing of Council members, hosted by the Government of Belgium.

But women's participation in peace processes must not be left to informal initiatives on the margins. Peace talks must accommodate a ***structured representation*** of women's concerns and interests. International institutions supporting conflict mediation must have gender experts and must propose concrete methods to bring women to peace talks. During the last year, UNIFEM supplied a gender advisor to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Uganda to support gender-sensitivity in this work of the UN Department for Political Affairs.

Today's political leaders are often peace mediators of the future, so the recruitment of women mediators relies upon the numbers of women in public office. UNIFEM experience has demonstrated the effectiveness of special quotas to promote women in leadership roles, notably in post-conflict Rwanda, where since September, women comprise 56 per cent of National Assembly members.

Peacekeeping

Women's needs for protection during and after conflict are different from those of men and often require a specific protection response. This year UNIFEM collaborated with the Department of Peace Keeping Operations and UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, supported by Canada and the UK, to identify such a response. Former force commanders and police commissioners from peacekeeping missions were asked to identify tactics to enable them to *detect*

imminent attacks on women and children, and to *prevent* these attacks. New doctrine, guidelines, procedures, incentives and even force composition and equipment are required to ensure changed practices on the ground. UNIFEM, DPKO and UN Action are now field testing an *Analytical Inventory* of best practices in protecting women and children, work that will be finalized next spring for use in training uniformed personnel.

If measures are not taken to prevent widespread and systematic targeting of women, this violence can spill over into the post-conflict environment. We know that in some contexts attacks on women *increase* after conflict. If countries and the international community do not respond decisively to violence against women, they raise the *cost* of peace-building. The cost is in delayed stabilization and reconciliation in countries where the rule of law cannot take root. Such costs and the delay of real peace can be avoided through decisive and early action to signal an end to impunity.

Peace-building

Recovery and peace building requires gender-responsive institutional reforms to ensure that women benefit from the peace dividend as much as men. Justice and security institutions are the first on the list, but efforts are also needed to ensure that economic recovery institutions build women's productive capacities, and that social service institutions respond to their needs.

Currently there are few means for women to identify and track funds allocated for their recovery needs. At the Third Sudan Donors' Consortium in May, UNIFEM and the 'Initiative for Inclusive Security' partnered with the Government of Norway to support participation by women leaders from diverse civil society groups in Sudan. In their own analysis, less than 2 per cent of the over two billion dollars that had been pledged to date had targeted women's empowerment.

Women's experiences of early recovery and peace-building demonstrate that there must be **structured representation** of women at all post-conflict donor conferences; and that a **mechanism to track funds** dedicated to women's empowerment and recovery should be in place in all humanitarian and post-conflict development funds.

We look forward to seeing these issues addressed in the forthcoming Report of the Secretary-General on Early Recovery.

Let us work together to ensure that women's voices are heard in peace building at both national and international levels.

Thank you.

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 'The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government'. Half, even more than half, of 'the people' are women. Yet for far too long, women's will, women's voices, women's interests, priorities, and needs have not been heard, have not determined who governs, have not guided how they govern, and to what ends."

--- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, statement for UNIFEM biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women 2008-2009*