

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 23 October 2007
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BELGIUM

Mr. Chevalier (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): As we speak — at this very moment — thousands of women are victims of sexual violence in its most atrocious forms. Who among us has not reacted with horror when reading the reports on the sexual violence committed against women in the Kivus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or in the Sudan? Therefore, some might wonder: what is the point of another debate in these hushed halls of the United Nations? We have the duty to answer that question by going beyond statements and reaffirming our political commitment to combating violence against women, using all means at our disposal. This public debate on strengthening the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, is thus particularly timely, because it is urgent to act. Therefore, I would like to warmly thank the presidency for having organized this debate.

Nearly seven years ago, the Security Council adopted its ground-breaking resolution on women and peace and security. Today, unfortunately, we must note that the issues and the challenges posed remain fully relevant. Despite the efforts of the United Nations system, described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/567), and despite efforts on all our part, the resolution's objectives have not been attained.

My country is particularly concerned about the persistent scourge of gender-based acts of violence, particularly in armed conflicts. The momentum unleashed by resolution 1325 (2000) has helped to accelerate the raising of awareness about that scourge. A doctrine against this type of crime is in the process of being developed. Various United Nations forums as well as Member States have contributed to that effort. Here, I should like to recall the Brussels Call to Action to Address Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond.

But we need more than awareness-raising if we are to implement the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) in that regard. Belgium calls for closer Security Council follow-up and for the development of tools to that end. Indeed, the Council should have at its disposal a horizontal report on gender-based acts of violence in the armed conflicts on its agenda. Such a report should draw on all sources available within the United Nations system and elsewhere. The experience acquired in combating the use of child soldiers has shown us the importance of this type of instrument. Such a report should also enable us to define better targeted and far more effective actions.

Strengthening the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in its entirety is a collective duty. The Security Council can and must do more when it defines the mandates of peacekeeping missions. In general terms, it must take greater account of the situation of women in the conflict in question. In fact, depending on the case, women can be not only potential victims, but also major actors in the political or socio-economic areas, or even combatants — actors in the conflict. Women continue to be underrepresented in peace and reconstruction processes.

That preliminary analysis must be translated into better-defined mandates, in the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000). Clearer mandates will facilitate follow-up by peacekeeping missions on issues related to resolution 1325 (2000) on the ground and will facilitate reporting to the Security Council. Moreover, the need to mainstream the gender perspective in peacekeeping mandates applies not only to United Nations peacekeeping missions, but also to the peacekeeping missions of regional organizations such as the European Union and the African Union.

As you yourself, Mr. President, emphasized in your invitation to this debate, the role and the responsibility of Member States in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) cannot be overestimated. At the national level, Belgium has prepared a charter for its armed forces to promote the equality of women and men; in particular, it takes into account the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) within the framework of operations conducted abroad. Training on the gender perspective is an integral part of preparing troops who will take part in a mission.

Furthermore, resolution 1325 (2000) now serves as a point of reference for the identification of assistance projects eligible for financial support from Belgium. The formulation of a national plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) is also under way.

Today's debate reminds us once again that action to meet these challenges goes beyond the Security Council's sphere of action. It is therefore important that all United Nations forums shoulder their responsibility to strengthen their implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that context, we welcome the debate planned in the Commission on the Status of Women at its forthcoming session, to be held in 2008.

In conclusion, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) represents an extremely complex challenge. The Security Council must show the way forward. We believe it is urgent to strengthen its capacity to follow up on problems related to genderbased acts of violence in armed conflict. To that end, the Council must have better-targeted reporting at its disposal.