

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security-23 October 2007
Extract Meeting Transcript/ English S/PV. 5766**

United Kingdom

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): May I join others in thanking you in particular, Mr. President, for honouring us with your presence today and for choosing such an important theme for this debate. We are also pleased to be honoured by the presence of so many other ministers.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2007/567) and for appearing here today. We also very much welcome what the Under-Secretary-General said about the work of the Secretariat on this important matter. We would like to extend our congratulations to them for what they have achieved.

It was also very good to be able to hear from the Special Adviser, the acting Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Coordinator of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. We welcome them to the Council and congratulate them and their teams for the important strides they have made on these issues.

This is not a new issue, as anyone who is familiar with the Greek play *Lysistrata* — which means “she who disbands armies”. The role of women in peace and security is a very old and distinguished one. It behoves us today to see how we can build on that.

The United Kingdom is committed to the key resolution 1325 (2000). We continue to promote its implementation at the United Nations and in the international community. As many speakers have noted, there has been progress in the seven years since its adoption, but much more remains to be done.

Women and children suffer disproportionately in armed conflict. They constitute the majority of all victims. The Security Council has a key role to play in providing for the protection of women from gender based violence, including torture, rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, prostitution and trafficking, which are all committed during conflict and continue in post-conflict situations. Conflict is the business of the Council.

The evidence from countries on the Council’s agenda today shows how much remains to be done. There is continued sexual violence on a massive scale in the conflict-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNICEF recently stated that 18,000 cases of rape were reported in three provinces alone. The cruelty of the sexual violence inflicted upon women and children, in particular as a weapon of war, is unspeakable. This is not a debate about the institutional niceties of whether the subject does or does not belong on the Council’s agenda. This is a debate about protecting people who are suffering as a result of conflict.

The situation in Darfur continues to be characterized by gross and systematic violations of human rights and by breaches of international humanitarian law. That too is a matter for the Council.

In Burma, Mr. Pinheiro, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights, has reported on the systematic sexual violence used by the military, police and border guards as part of the Government’s anti-insurgency tactics.

The Council has a duty to listen to, but also to act upon, such reports. We welcomed the Arria Formula meeting hosted by the Mission of France earlier this month. It is imperative that the Security Council hears the often unpalatable testimonies of witnesses on the ground. We heard about public rape in front of families and communities, forced rape and incest between victims, the introduction of objects into victims' cavities, the pouring of melted rubber into women's vaginas, the shooting of women in the vagina and inducing abortion using sharp objects.

That sort of cruelty is something that concerns us all. Events such as the ones described in that Arria Formula meeting — on the situation of women in Darfur, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and the report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the Security Council in September regarding conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are an important part of the debate.

Much of what resolution 1325 (2000) deals with takes place at levels where Security Council resolutions are often not heard. But we do need to hear about such acts. Resolution 1325 (2000) must be used as recognized doctrine to inform the Council's deliberations; in turn, it must have impact on the ground. That can only be achieved by fully implementing it. The provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) and successive presidential statements thereto need to be translated more consistently from words into actions.

We support Minister Chevalier's call for resolutions mandating that peacekeeping missions ensure that that happens. We also welcome what Minister Pratomo said about the role of regional organizations and civil society. In addition, we welcome the updated United Nations system-wide Action Plan for 2008-2009, which we hope will promote greater coherence and awareness within the United Nations system while also promoting gender mainstreaming within peace-support operations. In that context, I would like to join other speakers in congratulating the Secretary-General on appointing Ellen Margrethe Løj his Special Representative for Liberia. She is an outstanding choice.

To encourage national implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), Member States should be able to look to the United Nations for guidance and assistance in the production and ownership of national action plans. The Peacebuilding Commission can also contribute crucially by its development of peacebuilding strategies.

Violence against women is a crime in itself. It is an obstacle to long-term peace and security. Evidence shows that peace and security reconciliation processes are only sustainable when all actors in society are involved. We heard today of the need for the female voice to be heard at the Tripoli conference on Darfur, as part of a process of bringing in non-State actors. We would support that.

We also believe that, although the United Nations Secretariat has done some welcome work, there is more that can be done to enlist different parts of the Secretariat — for instance, UNIFEM and the United Nations System-wide Action Plan — so that they too can contribute to the reports that are presented to the Council and this issue can be given the weight it deserves.

The issue of sexual and gender-based violence against women is as much about perpetrators and tackling impunity as it is about victims. Those accused of such violations should be named, shamed and brought to fair trials. The Security Council will only limit its ability to ensure long-term peace and security in many of the countries on its agenda if

it does not address gender-based violence.

I would like to turn to the draft presidential statement before the Council. The United Kingdom would like to thank your Mission, Mr. President, for its outstanding work in seeking to promote the agenda of resolution 1325 (2000), not only through today's debate but also through the draft statement that it has prepared. We and other delegations had hoped that the final draft could have addressed the current and growing concern in the apparent proliferation of sexual and gender-based violence within States that are currently on the agenda of the Security Council.

We are disappointed that consensus could not be reached on the proposal to request the Secretary-General to prepare a report within the next six months that focused on sexual violence in current countries in conflict. I think that is all the more disappointing given that the Secretary-General himself and the Special Adviser and other speakers have said that they would support such a report. Quite frankly, we find it astonishing that anyone could object to that on narrow institutional grounds. We believe that the debate has shown very clearly why that is the business of the Council. But we also support what Mr. Chevalier and Mr. Pratomo have said, namely, that this is not the exclusive business of the Council. There are other parts of the United Nations system that can, and should, deal with this issue. We look to those who do oppose additional reporting through the Security Council to lead and produce initiatives in other United Nations bodies, which we would be happy to support.

We also hope, however, that it will be possible to return to this issue within the context of the Security Council when we have the report on the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). A long-term solution to gender-based violence depends upon the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), with true gender mainstreaming and gender equality. We are committed to working together towards that goal, and to do justice to this landmark resolution.