



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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# **SECURITY COUNCIL**

**STATEMENT**

**By**

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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT THE**

**SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON  
“WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY:  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SITUATIONS  
OF ARMED CONFLICTS”**

**NEW YORK, 19 JUNE, 2008**

**Madam President,**

On behalf of the Nigeria delegation, I would like to commend the US Presidency of the Security Council for initiating this open debate on ***Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict***. Having you, Madam President, in the Chair is reassuring, for it underlies the importance and urgency of the subject of our discussion.

2. Let me, reiterate my delegation's full appreciation of the concern raised in the Concept Paper on the endemic nature of sexual violence against women in situations of armed conflict, in particular the use of rape as a weapon of war. For my delegation, violent sexual acts such as rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery, forced marriages, and forced prostitution are crimes against humanity. For us, these crimes are as despicable as they are condemnable, and it does not matter whether they are committed in times of peace or war. These crimes affect not only the victims, but also families and entire communities. They traumatize and degrade lives, leaving behind stigma, humiliation and social ostracization.

3. We are equally worried that eight years after the adoption of the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325, which serves both as an action framework and reinforces other existing mechanisms, such as the CEDAW Convention and the Beijing Declaration, progress towards its implementation has been slow and uneven. Indeed, the objectives of the Resolution, including the need to enhance women's participation in decision-making, integrating gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations, protecting women from gender-based violence and mainstreaming gender into UN programme mechanisms, remain largely unfulfilled. The Nigerian delegation, therefore welcomes this new milestone resolution as a follow up to resolution 1325. But like resolution 1325, the critical challenge is how to ensure its steady and widespread implementation, particularly in conflict and post conflict areas.

4. In Africa, the most significant achievements under Resolution 1325 have taken place in post-conflict environments, where women now enjoy considerably enhanced role in decision-making. Strengthened by the African Union's 2005 Protocol on the Rights of Women, and the 2004 Heads of States Solemn Declaration on Gender Equity in Africa, a number of countries have scaled-up women's participation in politics and decision-

making. Through special measures, such as 'gender quota' and 'minimum threshold', some countries have accelerated the integration of women into national decision-making processes. Increasingly, women are also being included in national and continental peace and security initiatives.

**Madam President,**

5. Nigeria has signed and ratified the African Protocol on the Rights of Women. It has also taken special measures to guarantee the participation of women in governance and decision-making. At both Federal and State levels, efforts are being made to outlaw discriminatory customary or traditional practices which are harmful to the physical and mental health of women and girls. The Federal Government is also working closely with traditional rulers, non-governmental and faith-based organizations to change long-held attitudes and negative perceptions about women, and to inculcate in male youth respect for the fundamental rights of women and girls. School curricula and public enlightenment campaigns are also focusing on positive gender values, including the promotion of gender equality in all spheres.

6. The cumulative effect of these initiatives has led to a significant increase in women and girls literacy levels, including the number of women pursuing careers in male-dominated occupations. The country's national health policies and plans have also become more gender-sensitive and, in the case of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, due consideration of the special needs of women have become standard policy objectives. Nigeria has also made remarkable progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as they relate to women and children.

7. Notwithstanding these modest efforts, the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Africa's conflict environments remains fitful. The most critical challenge, as we see it, is how to concretely implement special measures to protect women and children against sexual violence, and the prosecution of those responsible for large-scale violations of women's rights. Another important challenge is how to institutionalize gender-sensitive policies through the domestication of relevant international Conventions and mechanisms, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action to Prevent Violence against Women. In addition, the political will necessary for implementing Resolution 1325 at the national and regional

levels is not evident in many cases. The fact that there is no requirement in place to ensure universal observance of relevant Conventions and principles has created further room for inconsistency among States.

8. It is imperative for my delegation that these challenges are seen as constituting lessons learned that should guide the UN as it seeks to bring an end to this unconscionable feature of armed conflict. To brace up to these challenges, the international community must appreciate the varying dimensions of the problems to enable it take remedial action, as appropriate. Our responsibilities must include preventing sexual violence against women, providing protection for them, assisting and caring for the children born of rape, including those who are victimized by the culture of impunity. Indeed, it is our responsibility to comfort and heal the communities that are savaged by these crimes. More importantly, we must strengthen punitive measures so that perpetrators and those responsible for breaches are brought to justice. To enhance these measures, there is need for greater women participation in civil and military components of multilateral peace support operations. We would also like to see gender sensitive training imparted to male civil and military personnel to foster their awareness of gender issues. The need to integrate gender perspectives and training into peacekeeping in Africa is critical, considering that well over 85% of UN peacekeepers are currently deployed in Africa.

**Madam President,**

9. I have elaborated some of the challenges we face in protecting women from sexual violence in situations of conflict. There are more. For instance, we also need to strengthen dissemination, sensitization and monitoring mechanisms in conflict zones. Conflict monitoring and early warning systems are also needed to help avert the prevalence of sexual violence during and after conflicts. There is also a need to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of humanitarian assistance in camps where women have been known to be especially vulnerable. Health and education programmes should be developed to deal with the effects of sexual violence, such as HIV/AIDS and psychological trauma. Additionally, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the relevant agencies and bodies involved in these efforts by identifying the various actors, programmes and activities relative to Security Council Resolution 1325 in Africa.

10. It is also important to make a clear commitment to move the implementation of this resolution forward. In this regard, we support the call for the Secretary General to periodically report to the Security Council on the use of sexual violence against women in armed conflict situations. We also invite the Secretary General to utilize existing regional and sub-regional resources like the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems and security architecture to strengthen the protection of women. We also call on the UN to take a more strategic view of this problem, with clear action oriented commitments to ensure measurable improvements in the lives victims.

**Madam President,**

11. The challenges we have outlined thus far are daunting, but they are well within our capacity to address. We can prevent and protect victims of sexual violence because we all have a good idea what the problems are, including the physical and social costs of these problems. My delegation believes that, by working together, we can also make perpetrators~to account for their misdeeds. Today's discussion is, therefore, a welcome first step. Once again, we thank the United States delegation for initiating this dialogue, and laying before us a very helpful draft Resolution. My delegation can associate itself with the draft Resolution, and we expect others to do the same.

12. Thank you, Madam President.