

Public Meeting on Women, Peace and Security- Thursday

We join others in thanking **USG Guehenno, Ms Angela King and Ms Heyzer** for the very elaborate and useful presentations. Today's discussion has enabled us to get a broader view of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution and the role of women in peace-building.

This meeting is opportune taking into account the study that has been carried out in collaboration with Ms King's Department with a view to implementing Resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000. We would also like to thank all those who have contributed to making this study possible.

The Mauritius delegation is happy to see the issue of protection of the most vulnerable members of the society being brought to the forefront and a culture of protection and prevention being developed progressively. We fully agree with the analysis of the study with regard to the systematic targeting of women and girls during armed conflicts due to their vulnerable status in society. Statistics testify that the vast majority of victims of armed conflicts throughout the world are women and children.

Mr President

Women have assumed and have been made to assume different roles during conflicts. While in some cases, they have actively participated in conflicts and have combated side by side with men, in most circumstances they are used as human shields, sex slaves and porters during conflicts. Not only their human rights are flouted but their dignity are undermined. They have undergone untold suffering and various other miseries. It is most unfortunate that very little has been done to alleviate their sufferings.

And yet women can play an important role in peacemaking such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network which is doing an excellent work in the Mano River Union countries and the Comoros Women Association which organized a weapon collection programme on the island of Anjouan in Comoros during the internal conflict. Such endeavours at the local grass root level should be recognised and encouraged.

UN through its peacekeeping missions and humanitarian organizations should step up efforts to work closely and in coordinated manner with regional, sub-regional and non-governmental organizations to sensitize women on gender-based violence, on the possibilities of protection from all forms of violence, and on the rights of women and children. This could be done through the development of generic Terms of Reference for gender specialists within human rights components of peacekeeping operations and through proper training of peacekeepers on gender and women's rights issues. In line with Brahimi recommendations, DPKO should work closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues in implementing projects designed to support the work of the civilian police in the field.

Mr President,

We would like to highlight the historic move taken by the African Union recently in Durban towards gender equality in Africa. Accordingly, the African Heads of State have endorsed a set of recommendations that allows a 50 percent participation of women in all the AU organs. This initiative is commendable and should be followed by other regional groups which have not yet done so to ensure adequate representation of women's interests at all levels, including key organs dealing with the maintenance of peace and security.