

Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 24th October 2000, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Listre, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations

Let me begin, Sir, by saying how pleased my delegation is to see you presiding over this open debate. Your vast experience and ability were amply demonstrated throughout the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and during the preparation and unfolding of the Millennium Summit. Argentina acknowledges and appreciates the traditional concern of the Government of Namibia with respect to the struggle for gender equality and for the promotion and protection of the rights of women — a concern shared by all other members of the Southern African Development Community and throughout the continent of Africa.

It is therefore no surprise that it is at the initiative of the Government of Namibia that the Council is today holding an open debate with a view to contributing to a better understanding of the relationship between women and international peace and security. We warmly welcome today's discussion of that topic.

Our thanks go also to Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), for their statements.

On the many occasions when the Security Council has considered the link between women and peace and security, it has generally been to condemn the appalling consequences of armed conflict for women, as victims of violence, trafficking, slavery, anti-personnel landmines and forcible displacement. Here, the Argentine delegation will continue, as it has done in the past, tirelessly to uphold the imperative need for full respect for international humanitarian and human-rights norms.

War crimes against women and girls, as recognized by the International Criminal Court in its Rome statute, must not go unpunished. We take this opportunity to urge parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, especially rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

Similarly, the Argentine Government voices its support for the creation of some kind of system to prevent sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in women and girls among both civilian and military populations, including suitable procedures for the lodging of complaints that would protect the identity of informants, as well as mechanisms to supervise peacekeeping personnel. It seems to us that realities increasingly demand that a gender dimension must be present in all field operations.

My delegation believes that conflicts with an impact on women pose a grave threat to the future of generations to come, undermine the foundations of the safety and security of families and social protection systems and create the worst of climates for the moral, political and socio-economic survival of the communities in question. We vigorously condemn the manipulation of any conflict situation by the victors to deny women and girls their fundamental human rights, in particular the right to physical integrity, food, proper housing, education, employment and health services. We therefore continue to support all Council initiatives with a particular focus on the special needs of women affected by armed conflict.

We will also support measures that the Secretary-General may decide to take to ensure that peacekeeping personnel receive proper training on gender issues, especially during post-conflict repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction. Similarly, we welcome any proposal aimed at greater gender awareness on the part of Member States, so that this will be reflected in national training programmes for military personnel and civilian police serving in the field.

My delegation wishes now to refer not to the international community's unquestionable moral imperative to provide special protection for women and children during armed conflict, but rather to the need to understand that there is an important role that women can and must play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building. It is worth recalling that on 8 March 2000, on International Women's Day and in the context of negotiations in the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, on Beijing + 5, the then President of the Security Council, Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, issued a press statement on behalf of the Council (Press release SC/6816), which observed that

“peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men”.

Now, more than seven months later, today’s historic debate is lending new power to that avowal.

Armed conflict has a special and disproportionate impact on women, and it is thus right to conclude that women have their own views which must be heeded in discussions of the best ways to avoid or settle conflicts and of how to organize the future of communities that have been affected by such conflicts. But, unfortunately, that is not how matters stand. Women are not sufficiently well represented at the decision-making level in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Argentina stresses the need for women to play a meaningful role in formulating policies and programmes to that end.

Here, we take note with satisfaction of the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations. As we have been doing elsewhere within the Organization, we urge the Secretary-General to appoint more women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys, and as his spokeswomen during missions of good offices related to peace and preventive diplomacy. We also appeal to Member States to take due account of the gender perspective when making national, regional and international appointments.

We encourage the participation of women in the negotiation of peace agreements, in all mechanisms for the implementation of such agreements and in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. Here, we urge that outmoded stereotypes of women’s roles be abandoned.

In conclusion, Argentina hails the work towards greater awareness of gender issues in the context of armed conflict that has been taking place through the activities of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, of the various funds and programmes of the United Nations, such as UNIFEM, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and of local and international women’s organizations. We encourage them to continue their efforts.