



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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Women, Peace and Security

Statement by H.E. The Hon Robert Hill Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Australia welcomes the Secretary-General's report on "Women and peace and security". This report has particular poignancy given this year's earlier passage of the UN Security Council Resolution 1820, which recognised the security dimension of sexual violence when used as a tactic of war. Australia takes this opportunity to reaffirm our strong support for UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

The Secretary-General's report makes for sobering reading. That millions of women and children continue to account for the majority of casualties in hostilities, that the targeted use of sexual violence is increasingly used as a potent weapon of war and acts as a destabilising factor in conflict and post conflict societies, and that impunity remains for perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence, is something for which we, as the global community, should be ashamed.

The report does, however, provide some encouragement. Following the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000, a culture of gender equality and women's empowerment in peace and security areas is, slowly, taking hold. Australia welcomes the leadership role that UN and other entities have taken in strengthening internal strategies and guidelines in the implementation of Resolution 1325.

We particularly acknowledge the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in this area. Their efforts send a clear message that gender mainstreaming, including ensuring the security of women and children in conflict and post conflict societies, and the inclusion of women in peace-making and peace-building operations, are firmly part of the peace and security agenda. Australia fully supports these efforts, and recently committed additional support to assist with the Department of Political Affairs' engagement with African regional organisations on conflict prevention.

Resolution 1325 calls for the full participation by women in peace processes and mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the negotiation of peace agreements. Women play an important role in the

prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and their full participation in the decision making processes relating to peace and security, including their economic and social empowerment, is a vital element of achieving comprehensive and sustainable solutions to complex security situations. Resolution 1325 improves women's rights and security and works in tandem with development priorities helping to ensure sustainable peace for men and women. At times, however, the roles that women play may fall outside official structures, or they may be marginalised because of deeply held gender discrimination. Nevertheless, it is important to value and incorporate in national and UN conflict prevention frameworks, local women's initiatives and experiences in preventing hostilities. The Secretary-General's report cites numerous initiatives by UN and other entities aimed at putting this into effect, demonstrating that progress is occurring.

Australia is working in the Pacific region, with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the UNDP Pacific Centre, to strengthen regional organisations' work on crisis prevention and recovery, conflict analysis, strengthening regional security, mainstreaming gender considerations, and implementing violence reduction policies and interventions. Australia also values and supports efforts by regional organisations, such as femLINKPACIFIC, which is working towards the full implementation of Resolution 1325, by strengthening regional information sharing and dissemination in the Pacific. Australia supports efforts to enhance advocacy to appropriate national and regional decision making bodies to ensure women's full participation in decision making, especially in relation to matters of peace and security.

The Secretary-General's report highlighted the ongoing and egregious incidences of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Australia welcomes the measures that some Member States have taken to prevent and respond to SGBV. Gender training for security forces and judicial officials, developing meaningful measures to protect and rehabilitate survivors of SGBV, increasing public awareness about SGBV and removing the stigma of SGBV are key elements to tackling this scourge. But, perhaps most crucial is the need to end impunity for perpetrators of SGBV. As a global community, we cannot continue to allow the perpetrators of such violence to go unpunished. Neither can we continue to allow the victims of SGBV to be the subject of court systems that do not take account of the needs of victims, nor can we condone situations where the systematic intimidation of survivors and reprisals by perpetrators is condoned.

In June this year, the Security Council passed Resolution 1820, which drew attention to the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict, including by UN personnel. At that time, Australia called for effective training and strong command structures within military and police contingents, be they blue berets or not, to prevent and to prosecute these crimes. Australia also strongly supported the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy. We take this opportunity to reiterate this call and our support for zero tolerance.

The Secretary-General's report on "Women and peace and security" to this General Assembly provides a timely audit of the progress made in the eight years since the Security Council passed Resolution 1325, and it starkly highlights the extent of the work that remains to be done. To build a prosperous, sustainable, peaceful and secure society, one half of the population cannot be excluded from peace processes and nation building in post conflict societies. We welcome the progress made in the eight years since Resolution 1325 was adopted, and call on the UN system, member states, regional bodies, and civil society to enhance efforts at mainstreaming gender perspectives at all levels of peacekeeping and peace building.