



AUSTRALIA

STATEMENT

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OPEN MEETING OF THE SECURITY
COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND PEACE
AND SECURITY

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OPEN MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

Mr President,

Thank you for organising this open debate.

As violence continues in the Middle East - and the UN and its Member States to service a growing number of peace operations around the world - some may wonder about the value of the Council holding a thematic debate such as this. What does it achieve? ^{struggle}

Well, Mr President, my delegation certainly thinks it worthwhile - and welcomes the opportunity to participate.

We consider it valuable for several reasons.

Firstly, it contributes to the ongoing process of opening up the Council, not just to non-members, but to new ways of thinking - about what constitutes threats to international peace and security and, more importantly, how to deal with them.

Secondly, it helps us to move forward our broad agenda for the advancement of women - raising awareness of gender factors, moving consideration of so-called "womens issues" out of the enclaves of the Third Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women and into the central, vital organs of the UN.

Thirdly, it should assist the UN in dealing with other major challenges it is confronting - there are real and practical linkages to be made here with implementation of the Millennium Summit Report, of the Brahimi Report on peace operations, with the effort to establish the International Criminal Court, with the UN's development agenda, with the efforts to reform and make the UN more effective.

This debate could inform our thinking on how to deal with all these major areas of concern.

Of course, we are not starting from scratch: the building blocks are there, going back to the codification of the laws of armed conflict in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols of 1977, in which the special needs of women in situations of armed conflict, both as combatants and as civilians, were recognised through clauses providing for their special protection.

The negotiation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court represented a quantum leap forward, recognising specific crimes against women as both war crimes and crimes against humanity.

But Mr President, I want to focus more today on women not so much as victims of armed conflict, as sufferers, as vulnerable people whose rights need protecting - but as contributors and active participants. This is the important direction in which our thinking, as an international community, is evolving - and where the Council can bring much needed momentum.

Just as we came to recognise - not so long ago - the critical link between gender and development, and that achieving sustainable development required the active participation and involvement of both women and men in the development process, so we are moving (rapidly) to recognition that the same, vital, linkage exists in relation to effective conflict resolution, peace making, peace building, post conflict activities.

The Council itself gave a valuable boost to this in March this year, in a statement it issued on International Womens Day, when it recognised publicly the inextricable link between peace and equality between men and women. Today's debate builds on that acknowledgement - that equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

The Windhoek Declaration of May 2000 and the Namibia Plan of Action on "Mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peace support operations", which were informed by the three year study conducted by the the Division for the Advancement of Women and DPKO, were another important step. Australia can support many of its key conclusions and recommendations:

- That the gender dimensions of peace processes have not been adequately recognised;
- That women have so far been denied their full role in national and international peacekeeping and peacemaking operations;
- That the mandates of UN preventive peace missions, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding should include provisions for womens protection and address gender issues;
- That peace support operations should include appropriately staffed and integrated gender units and gender advisers.

The recent review on war affected children by Graca Machel is also important. A new chapter on the role of women and the peace process, recognised that building peace from the grass roots level is an important aspect of womens participation - that even as they hold their families together in war and post-war conditions, women are creating and sustaining peace at the community level. But it went further, to argue that the role of women must go beyond this informal grass roots level; that women have potential to make a greater contribution to peacemaking and peacebuilding; that they should be given an active role in the formal processes of conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction.

So, Mr President, the gaps - and the possibilities - in relation to womens participation have been identified, the linkages are becoming more evident and acknowledged by authoritative voices, the lessons learned are being examined and placed before the UN system and Member States and the calls to action - to factor women into the peace and security equation in new ways - are loud and becoming louder.

The question is, how do we - or how should we - heed them?

Australia believes there are a number of practical steps which can be taken. We are applying these in our own development assistance programs, in our region in particular. We would be happy to share our experience with programs in Bougainville, the Solomon Islands and East Timor, designed to support the role of women in peace processes (operating alongside programs to empower women and to provide greater protection for women in situations of armed conflict).

Beyond our national efforts, we would wish to see a more deliberate and concentrated effort, at the regional and international level, to increase womens participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding operations. At the top of the spectrum, renewed attention should be given to the consideration of qualified women for appointment as Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and as senior field staff for peace support operations. This requires effort on the part of the UN and of Member States, to identify suitably qualified women for leadership positions. Australia has just completed a lengthy and intensive exercise to do just that. We hope that other governments will do likewise.

In addition to identifying suitable women for these specialist, trouble-shooting tasks, we should be working to place more women generally in the international legal system - in the Tribunals, on the courts, in the ILC - which I note has never had a single woman serve on it in its fifty year history. What sort of message does that send about womens participation? We should also be preparing actively now to be ready to meet the requirement of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Perhaps not everyone is aware that Article 36 (8) imposes on states parties an obligation to take into account, when selecting Judges, the need for "fair representation of female and male judges" *within the membership of the Court. This requirement is also found in the associated*

article concerning the staff of the Prosecutor's office and of the Registry. The inclusion of these gender provisions, specifying the need for qualified women to be employed in all organs of the Court, grew in part from the UN's experience with the two special tribunals - and the report produced by the Secretary-General that accompanied the ICTY Statute.

There is a new emphasis in the UN's management of conflict, on the role of civilian police. Here, too, there is scope to consider and incorporate a gender perspective. We need more sensitive and sophisticated resources for gathering evidence, interviewing victims, counselling traumatised persons, interacting with communities in post conflict situations. Recruitment and training should give appropriate attention to involving women.

Mr President,

I said at the outset that this was an important debate. It gives needed impetus to a clear trend towards greater involvement of women in managing conflict and in peace processes. Australia hopes that it will result, also, in a renewed determination, on the part of both the UN and its Member States, to take the practical steps necessary to make this happen. Frankly, they are all within reach - but they need a good push.

There is a lot of talk in the UN about smart sanctions. Let us be smart in other ways by factoring women into the peace, security and conflict activities of the UN. By doing things differently, we can do them better.