



AUSTRALIA

**UNGA57
Security Council**

Statement delivered by

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Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations**

Women and peace and security

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Mr President

Two years after the adoption of resolution 1325, no one seriously questions how central gender issues are to preventing and resolving conflict and to the rebuilding of communities after conflict. At a time when too many resolutions and statements languish on shelves, this is no small achievement.

The study on Women, Peace and Security, which Australia was pleased to support financially, and the Secretary General's report on the study, maintain the momentum of resolution 1325 and are to be welcomed.

The detailed information contained in these two documents should leave us in no doubt that, if we are serious about conflict resolution, we have to be serious about gender perspectives on conflict. Gender perspectives are neither marginal nor optional; they cannot and should not be an after-thought. Rather, Mr President, new patterns of conflict, and the fact that women and girls are too often the chief victims of conflict, means that gender is central to much that this Council and UN peacekeeping operations do.

Mr President,

The recommendations and presentation of facts in the study and the Secretary-General's report speak for themselves. Together with the complementary study produced under UNIFEM's auspices, they provide us with a valuable and sensible guide to how we can further implement resolution 1325, and how we can ensure that perspectives of women and girls are systematically incorporated into all of our efforts to preserve and restore peace.

I would like to highlight two of the many important observations of the studies. The first is that pre-conflict inequities and disregard for women's rights become worse during conflict. Indeed, such inequities, and in particular the lack empowerment and participation on the part of women, reduce the capacity of communities to avoid conflict. Therefore, a strategy of conflict prevention – which should be our primary objective – should necessarily focus on empowering women *before* conflicts start.

Second, we need to see women as important contributors to peace and not simply as victims of conflict. We must be diligent and creative in giving women a role in peace processes. Here the Council can play an important leadership role, particularly in designing its mandates and ensuring that the necessary resources are made available to ensure that the mandates are fulfilled. The experience from our region – in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and East Timor – gives ample testimony to the vital difference that women can make to the course of a conflict. I shall not go into the details of these regional experiences here, but they are set out in the written text of my statement. They are also discussed in the statement being made by the distinguished Ambassador of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum group of countries.

I should say, however, Mr President, that Australia's development cooperation program, recognises the social and gender dimensions of conflict, and therefore supports the goal of increasing women's participation in decision-making and access

to and control over resources. It is working to ensure women play an equal role in political structures and in community decision-making.

In June this year Australia launched its peace, conflict and development policy. The policy provides a framework for improving the ability of our development cooperation program to address conflict and instability. This means there will be a greater emphasis on conflict prevention and peacebuilding alongside the aid program's more traditional missions of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. Given the importance of ensuring the active engagement of women in peacebuilding processes, the aid program will improve the integration of gender principles into all aid responses.

In future, we will also support those elements of society which work for the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances. The role that women can play as peacebuilders will be a particular focus.

Thank you Mr President.

Regional Experiences Relating to Women, Peace and Conflict

In recent years, the Australian Government's aid program has supported activities in East Timor, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Bougainville and Sri Lanka which provide the opportunity for addressing the social dimensions of conflict. These activities have been aimed at strengthening the ability of women, communities and community leaders to address violence in communities as well as violence against women in particular.

The following are examples of recent AusAID activities being implemented in conflict affected environments:

Solomon Islands

The Community Peace and Restoration Fund (CPRF) which has specifically targeted its support to ensure that women's organisations, particularly those focused on peace and reconciliation, have access to assistance and development opportunities. Reflecting this, the CPRF has ensured that they have equal numbers of male and female provincial coordinators on their team.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, significant support was provided through the Women in Peace Network, to assist the work they were doing to bring opposing parties together to end the conflict.

The Law and Justice Institutional Strengthening Program (LJISP) is fostering and supporting the recruitment of women into recruit positions and other training courses. The establishment of a staff development plan, a credible promotion system and the development and implementation of an equal employment opportunity policy and strategy are key objectives for the Program over the next year.

East Timor

Funding to the UNTAET Gender Affairs Unit. This involved: development of a gender mainstreaming policy for the public service; a toolkit for departments to ensure human resources and programs are gender sensitive; and gender awareness training for senior managers.

Capacity building for NGOs to identify peacebuilding issues, and training to carry out peacebuilding programs.

Microfinance project specifically for women.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka there are a number of projects which focus on women including:

Peacebuilding through economic and community empowerment.

Capacity building for financial services.

Assistance to UNHCR for the return and relocation of internally displaced persons in the North and East. The projects aim to support voluntary repatriation of refugees and pursue durable solutions for the return, relocation and integration of IDPs into local communities.

Food Security and Livelihood Recovery Program in the Jaffna Peninsula. Activities focus on combating food insecurity and restoring livelihoods for vulnerable households in the peninsula. Activities include nutritional improvement, income generation and agricultural rehabilitation. The activity will focus support on the most vulnerable households including IDPs, daily workers and widow-headed households.