

Security Council Open Debate on Women and Peace and Security
Monday, 5th October 2009, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ambassador Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, and thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/465) on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Belgium also wishes to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to organize this very important debate. With regard to the fight against sexual violence, this past year will be a landmark in the annals of the United Nations. In just over one year, the Security Council has adopted resolution 1820 (2008), expanded the follow-up mechanisms of resolution of 1612 (2005) and recently, with the adoption of resolution 1888 (2009), provided the United Nations with practical tools to tackle sexual violence in the field.

Belgium, which had the privilege of participating in the drafting and adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) while it held a seat on the Security Council, welcomes the cohesion and vision the Council has demonstrated in this field throughout this period. We hope for the swift appointment of the new special representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence and establishment of the team of experts called for in resolution 1888 (2009). We are ready to assist these two mechanisms in carrying out their missions.

The fight against sexual violence is one thing; the broader question of the role of women and their place in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and reconstruction processes is quite another. Resolution 1325 (2000) is and must remain, in our view, the key instrument guiding our actions in this area. However, as far as the implementation of this resolution goes — excuse me for speaking frankly, Mr. President — the international community really has nothing to be proud of. We must keep our eyes on the bigger picture.

Of course, some progress has been made. Fifteen years after the Beijing Conference, notably thanks to the industry of the Commission on the Status of Women, we can affirm that questions relating to gender have found their place in official United Nations discourse. We also recognize the efforts that have been made by the Secretary-General to ensure greater representation of women at a high level in the United Nations administration, even though there remains a long way to go.

If we make the effort to look beyond our New York bubble and cast an eye towards the situation on the ground, we are forced to recognize that the situation of women living in countries in conflict or emerging from it has not really improved since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) nine years ago. For Belgium, this status quo is unacceptable. It is specifically the lives of such women that we committed to improving when we adopted resolution 1325 (2000).

As far as Belgium is concerned, the situation is very simple. A year from now, we will celebrate the passage of 10 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). We therefore have one year left to fill the gap that exists between the programmes envisioned in New York or our capitals on the one hand, and, on the other, their financing and implementation on the ground. Without significant efforts in that direction, it will be a sad anniversary indeed that we celebrate next year.

What can we do in one year? Probably a great deal more than we imagine. First, several essential measures can be taken easily, almost overnight, and at very little cost to the United Nations. Such measures might include, for example, increasing the number of women in United Nations mediation teams and in particular the appointment of a female chief negotiator. Similarly, a gender adviser should be appointed in the Department of Political Affairs.

Secondly, and in order to ensure that the specific needs of women are truly taken into account and earnestly responded to in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, we must put our money where our mouth is when it comes to gender budgeting. We must allocate sufficient resources to women's programmes. This is an effort which it behoves each and every one of us to undertake with urgency, not only here but also at the national level.

Thirdly, we must support and encourage the growing presence of women among the Blue Helmets and police officers in peacekeeping operations. We can all strive in this regard to develop women's units and enhanced expertise on gender issues within our own armed forces and police forces.

Fourthly, Belgium cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance and usefulness of developing national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Belgium is proud to announce that it developed such a plan of action last year and is ready to share its experience with any Member State that may be interested.

In conclusion, with regard to developing such national action plans, Belgium wonders whether the Peacebuilding Commission could play a more significant role in the countries in which it is active. In the Central African Republic, the Commission, chaired by Belgium, has already striven as far as possible to ensure the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). It would take but a small additional effort to develop a national action plan in partnership with the national authorities, and Belgium is prepared to help.