

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Fernandes Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations.

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate. It gives me great pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting.

I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his intervention. Brazil is grateful for the briefing provided by Ms. Michelle Bachelet and for the work that she has been doing as head of UN-Women. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous for his briefing and the representative of the non-governmental organization Femmes Africa Solidarité for her intervention.

Supporting and promoting women's participation in the maintenance of international peace and security is an increasingly important aspect of the Security Council's responsibility under the Charter. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), this body has contributed significantly to United Nations efforts to refine our collective understanding of the implications of armed conflict for women and, just as important, to support them as agents of peace. The establishment of UN-Women and the appointment of a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict testify to the progress made.

There is, however, a long way to go before women are fully and duly integrated into national and multilateral peace efforts around the world. In various respects, such as the number of women representatives and mediators; the number, substance and relative importance of provisions in peace agreements; and post-conflict strategies or policies, women's participation in peace and security processes is still insufficient.

We are therefore confronted with a real need for the United Nations, Governments and non-State actors to foster and support their involvement in the field of international peace and security. Among the several strategies that can be used to attain that goal, one of the most important is enhancing dialogue with women's groups in conflict and post-conflict situations. Frequent consultations with them, for example, can be an important vehicle to convey the specific concerns and needs of women to all stakeholders in peace efforts, including United Nations Special Representatives, mediators and special envoys.

Meaningful interaction with women's groups must also be an integral part of our peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. Besides assisting missions in fulfilling their mandates, in particular regarding the protection of civilians, such groups can help ensure a sustained commitment to gender sensitivity. This is especially important when preparing mission drawdowns or transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, as dialogue with women can stimulate national Governments and the United Nations family to streamline gender issues into their policies after missions leave the country.

Building capacity in the area of women and peace and security is also key. Late last year, Brazil signed a letter of intent with UN-Women, in order to deepen our cooperation regarding the training of peacekeepers on gender issues and the promotion of South-South cooperation on gender issues involving peacekeeping training centres in Latin America and Africa.

Women's economic empowerment in post-conflict situations is also vital to making them full partners in peace efforts and increasing their ability to contribute to the consolidation of peace. Responding to their needs in areas such as education, employment, land and property rights and health services will likely reduce the chances of relapse into conflict, for example, as women tend to be the first ones to appreciate tangible peace dividends in the daily lives of families and communities.

Although Brazil's reality differs greatly from that of post-conflict countries, some of our experiences may be useful for such societies. One interesting example is the Bolsa Familia, a conditional cash transfer programme that has lifted millions of Brazilians out of poverty. Under the programme, women are the preferred recipients of transfers, and experience has shown that this practice increases their bargaining power within the family structure and communities. It is also worth mentioning that, on the margins of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Brazil organized, in collaboration with UN-Women, the Women Leaders' Summit on the Future Women Want. The meeting

highlighted the need to accelerate women's full participation in governance at all levels, including women's leadership in all decision-making processes. It also underlined the importance of ensuring the elimination of all discriminatory barriers preventing women from having equal access to, owning and managing productive resources and assets, and from contributing to and benefiting from the opportunities provided by the pursuit of sustainable development. Although this applies to all countries, we know that empowering women may be especially important in post-conflict situations, as it tends to enhance the chances of avoiding a relapse into conflict.

There is compelling evidence that women, when empowered, can have a significant positive impact on the lives of many people in their societies, particularly in countries emerging from conflict.

The Security Council is therefore called on to continue to make a significant contribution to ensure that such impact is fully felt in all pertinent situations on its agenda.