

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

*Statement by Mr. Rishchynski Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.*

We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to take the floor.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I wish to thank the Indian presidency for convening this open debate that provides focus on the important role of women in establishing and maintaining peace and security.

As our Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, stated at the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations in September, women are the key to the development of pluralistic societies, and the full and active participation of women in all parts of civil society and throughout society as a whole is very important in that regard. Last year, our Foreign Minister met with women in Libya to discuss the role women could play in that country's transition. He also met with the Afghan Women's Network at the International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn to hear their concerns. Canada also advocated for, and facilitated the inclusion of, women's civil society groups at the International Conference on Afghanistan this year, and continues to work with the Afghan Women's Network to raise awareness of issues relating to women, peace and security among provincial and national officials, parliamentarians and influential community leaders.

Canada heartily welcomes the Secretary-General's recognition of the need to take effective measures to address conflict-related sexual violence such as rape as a weapon of war, and calls for the protection of human rights defenders. Governments have the responsibility to deal with the issues of women and peace and security. Civil society can potentially play a constructive role. For example, in Sierra Leone, for which Canada has the honour to chair the country-specific configuration for peacebuilding, the defence of women's rights by local organizations has led the State to act to protect particularly vulnerable groups of women, leading specifically to a new law criminalizing sexual offences and imposing stiffer minimum penalties for offenders. The law is a step forward in holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable in that country.

Women can play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. We therefore call for the continued constructive participation of women throughout peace processes, mission drawdowns and political transitions.

In conclusion, Canada wishes to note that the Secretary-General's report outlines the considerable progress that the international community has made on issues of women and peace and security, even just in the past year, but we are equally cognizant that much more remains to be done.