

Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 24th October 2000, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Mr. Shen Guofang, Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations

I should like at the outset, Sir, to thank you for presiding over this meeting and to express our appreciation to the delegation of Namibia for its initiative in convening it. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and to express our deep appreciation for the statements made by his Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Ms. Angela King, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Ms. Noeleen Heyzer. Both statements touched on a number of important issues and also contained a number of important recommendations that merit serious consideration by the Council.

Women play an irreplaceable role in the creation of human civilization and in the promotion of social development. In China, there is a popular saying that “women hold up half of the sky”. Without the full participation of women, therefore, our efforts to maintain international peace and security can be neither fruitful nor lasting.

However, women, more often than not, are the direct and principal victims of war and armed conflict. Given that the Security Council’s primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security, today’s open debate on “Women and peace and security” will help the Council to better fulfil its mandate, entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

My delegation condemns all violent acts committed against women in time of armed conflict, and it urges all parties to conflicts strictly to abide by international humanitarian and human rights law. We also call on all Governments to investigate and bring to justice those who commit crimes against women. We hope also that the international community will intensify its efforts to protect and assist conflict-affected women and help them return to their homeland and resume their normal lives. We call on all concerned States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to enhance their cooperation in this regard.

We also encourage women actively to participate in conflict prevention and settlement and in post-conflict reconstruction, and we hope that the international community will create favourable conditions in this regard.

I would like here to pay tribute to the role played by women in non-governmental organizations. We hope that women will also play a greater role in peacekeeping operations, in order better to assist women who have been affected by war and conflicts. Women should participate also in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. We would be encouraged to see, some day in the future, in a war-torn area, a peacekeeping operation composed entirely of women.

In our opinion, women do not fully participate in our work not because they are not capable of doing so but because we have not given this question sufficient attention. We look forward to an effective training programme in this regard.

In June, the United Nations convened, here in New York, a special session on the issue of women. The Political Declaration adopted at that session called on all Governments and countries to intensify their joint efforts in order better to protect women’s rights and interests. Today’s open debate could be considered part of the follow-up of the June special session. We hope that this meeting will make a significant contribution to enhancing the protection afforded to women and that it will lead to effective follow-up actions. We are hopeful also that this momentum will be maintained within the United Nations system. We believe that a full assessment, within the United Nations system, of the impact of armed conflict on women would be most useful.

The question of women is a cross-cutting one which the United Nations agencies have been deliberating for many years. The work of the Council should be synergetic with that of other agencies, for only in this way can we motivate all parties and players to make full use of the advantages provided by the United Nations system as a whole in order to achieve the best possible results.