

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

Statement by Mr. Mayr-Harting Permanent Mission of the EU to the United Nations.

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We thank the Deputy Secretary-General; the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Michelle Bachelet; the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous; and the President of Femmes Africa Solidarité, Ms. Bineta Diop, for their statements.

We find the focus of today's debate pertinent as we move forward in the practical implementation of our commitments in the field of women, peace and security. Conflict prevention, conflict resolution and building sustainable peace require cooperation between all stakeholders at all levels, and women's organizations play a particularly important role in that regard. We therefore welcome the focus on the contributions of women's civil society organizations to peace and security in the presidential statement adopted by the Council on 31 October (S/PRST/2012/23).

The number of national and regional action plans adopted for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has continued to increase. This provides us with an opportunity to compare different experiences to guide the formulation of new plans and review the existing plans. Moreover, with 26 out of 37 national action plans now equipped with indicators, we are better placed to evaluate their actual implementation and results. The European Union adopted a comprehensive approach for the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) in 2008. It has also established indicators to evaluate and assess gaps in its action plans. In March 2012, the European Union reported on its implementation of those resolutions in the context of our Common Security and Defence Policy. More than half of all European Union member States have by now adopted national action plans.

We value the increased reporting and briefings to the Council on the situation of women and girls in armed conflict. We take note of the Secretary-General's conclusion in his report (S/2012/732) that the information flow to the Council and its response remain uneven, and encourage further efforts in that regard. We welcome the insights provided by the updated information collected against the set of indicators on women and peace and security, and look forward to the continued provision and analysis of that data.

We need to continue to take real steps to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Eight out of 16 peacekeeping missions include the protection of civilians in their mandate. Early warning and response tools have been established, and an increasing number of actors, including civil society, are engaged in assessing risks and the escalation of violence in armed conflict, including through new technologies for incident and crisis mapping. However, we agree with the Secretary-General that the gains made in access to information have yet to produce consistent early action.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution (A/66/811) and its annex I, entitled "Guidance for Effective Mediation", which highlight the importance of women's participation in peace processes. While women were present in 86 per cent of the United Nations mediation support teams involved in 14 peace negotiations in 2011, only four of the negotiating party delegations included a woman delegate. Only two out of nine peace agreements signed contained women and peace and security provisions.

Yet, as recent experience has shown, periods of transition offer a unique opportunity to break the cycle of women's marginalization and make significant gains in women's participation. We need to address factors discouraging women's candidacy and equal electoral participation, and security for women in elections. Provisions on women, peace and security should be included in peace negotiations as early as possible. We warmly welcome the concrete targets the Secretary-General has set for women and mediation, especially that of appointing a female United Nations chief mediator.

Women's perspectives and voices are essential to tackling the security, social and economic challenges facing

communities emerging from conflict. The engagement of women's leaders and organizations needs to be systematically supported in peace processes to ensure their involvement from the early stages. Lack of security, limiting mobility and access, has an immense and negative impact on women's participation in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings. Moreover, women who engage actively to promote women's rights and perspectives often become targets for violence. We urge the Council to continue to work to ensure the protection of human rights defenders.

The EU Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities aims to promote the representation of women and the availability of adequate resources for dedicated mediation gender expertise from an early stage in mediation processes. Today, almost all of our 15 ongoing civilian missions and military operations have a human rights and/or gender adviser on the ground. We are stepping up predeployment training efforts on gender and Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

In July 2011, the EU set out an initial programme in response to a Libyan request for capacity-building training for both civil society and new public service bodies. As part of those projects, a course for women was delivered in Misrata in June to support women in leadership positions and emerging women leaders and managers. The partnership established with the EU, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme on enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict planning aims to promote close cooperation among all stakeholders.

The commitment to break down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment was also expressed at the high-level event on the margins of this year's General Assembly ministerial week on the Equal Futures Partnership, co-founded by the United States, Australia, Benin, Bangladesh, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, Tunisia and the European Union.

In conclusion, we are deeply concerned about the references in the Secretary-General's report to the continued use of sexual violence and threats of sexual violence as tactics of conflict over the past year, including in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Syria and northern Mali. We welcome and further encourage drawing on the support of gender experts in United Nations commissions of inquiry.

We commend the work of the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law. We welcome the nomination of the new Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, who brings extensive personal experience and a strong commitment to the post.

Finally, our actions need to measure up to our words. The European Union continues to be active with regard to women and peace and security in more than 70 countries. It supports the development and implementation of national action plans, non-governmental organizations and training for governmental agencies. Let me affirm our commitment to continue that work in cooperation with all partners, including women's organizations, whose contributions remain key to the legitimacy and sustainability of our efforts.