

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security – 23 October 2007
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GUATEMALA

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to the Ghanaian presidency for convening this annual meeting on women and peace and security, which helps us further the work of achieving the full and complete implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000).

This debate also allows us to consider the full application of that important resolution. We are convinced of the essential role played by women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, in the promotion of justice and of reconciliation, support for disarmament and demobilization and the reconstruction of national institutions — all essential pillars for peacebuilding.

We are also aware that women and girls suffer from effects more devastating than those already entailed by the conflict itself, especially owing to increasingly widespread gender-based violence, rapes, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, undesired pregnancy as a result of these heinous acts and the stigma that those women and girls suffer in their own communities. Those are all acts that affect their psychological and emotional stability and even put their lives at risk.

We shall not rest until we see that in the field, the specific needs of women and girls are receiving the special priority attention they deserve, with the active cooperation of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that work on this issue and Member States, with the support of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups. In that context, we want to recognize the important work being done by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. We urge them to continue their contribution in view of the major challenges that lie ahead.

In that connection, we support the creation of effective institutions that ensure the promotion of the rights of women and girls and the capacity-building necessary to their inclusion, on an equal basis, in peace process negotiations and at the decision-making level in peacebuilding. The mainstreaming of the gender perspective in national and international plans is vital to achieving integral, balanced peacekeeping operations.

We thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2007/567), which serves as a basis for this dialogue, because it continues to update, monitor and revise the previous Action Plan, for 2005-2007, and for his presentation of the new, updated Action Plan, for 2008-2009, on the advances and obstacles in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Our delegation believes that the changes made in the Action Plan for 2008-2009 are positive. The re-shaping of the concept and the focus on five thematic areas — of which prevention, participation and protection are transversal, interrelated with other thematic

resolutions; relief and recovery emphasize the concrete needs of women and children; and the normative thematic area — will make it possible to broaden the scope of efforts to apply resolution 1325 (2000) and will help States to meet their commitments regarding equality between women and men and the empowerment of women in the field of peace and security.

As a country that has emerged from conflict, we are aware of the importance of receiving help in preparing national plans and strategies to coordinate policies, because that is the most important time to promote the application of resolution 1325 (2000).

At the national level, the Ministry of Defence of Guatemala confirmed its commitment to the principle of gender equality through a process that harmoniously integrates women into military life. That has been accomplished with respect for human rights and in the context of the national and international legal order.

Since women were accepted in the military in 1996, there has been a yearly increase in the participation of Guatemalan women in the army, as cadets in the Polytechnic School. Currently, there are 59 women officers in active duty, which represents 4 per cent of the total. There are 604 women specialists, which represents 18 per cent. There are 42 women who are commissioned officers, representing almost 16 per cent. In summary, there are 955 women in active duty, amounting to 7.17 per cent of the total. Those women have grades ranging from second lieutenant to colonel, in areas such as army administration, military police, war material, transmissions, navy and air force, and are all graduates of the Polytechnic School.

In peacekeeping operations, we have maintained an average of 11 per cent of female personnel in contingents in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), including military observers. We will continue to broaden our policy of including female personnel in each contingent. Currently, in the military police unit in our MINUSTAH contingent, a woman commands the operational and investigation unit.

Allow me to refer to gender advisers, who should be included in peacekeeping operations in the field. Currently, 11 out of 18 active missions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations include that post. That is encouraging, but it is not enough. We believe that every mission should incorporate that post. Peacekeeping operations, in addition, can help provide information on the violent acts committed against women and girls. The basic thing is to know exactly what is happening on the ground. As Minister Koenders of the Netherlands rightly pointed out, it is essential not to remain silent and not to allow silence to become impunity.