

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
Tuesday, 26th October 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Ms. Mary Elizabeth Flores Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations

My delegation is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this open debate of the Security Council on the contribution of women to international peace and security. We acknowledge the visionary work of the Council and its members, aimed at enhancing the principles of resolution 1325 (2000) and the empowerment of women. We are pleased with the new gender entity, UN Women, under the leadership of a distinguished stateswoman, Michelle Bachelet. The Secretary-General has also shown an excellent example in incorporating women into the upper management of the Organization, and I reiterate our commitment to cooperation and support for all.

For reasons that have been extensively studied and debated through the ages, women and children have always been the vast majority of the innocent victims of violence and armed conflict. The irony remains that these victims, the most vulnerable and most affected, emerge from their precarious condition of fragility to provide great consolation in times of anguish, to be healers of suffering and to help mitigate the torments caused by ruthless violence in all its manifestations.

Due to the very nature of their being, women, from birth, learn to be peacemakers and negotiators in conflicts. This is the task that they carry out entirely naturally within the bosom of their families, and by virtue of their innate abilities as catalysts of agreements in the intimacy of their homes and in the most complex situations. We have seen them acting as mediators in hostilities, as bridges to overcome differences and as intermediaries in serious disputes.

Women listen with their feelings. Through the healing of the heart and the balm of emotion, they can reach the soul to cure wounds, where medicine stumbles and science fails. Sometimes relief comes more from soothing the affliction than from treatment of an actual physical injury, just as a mother puts her child to sleep with the mellifluous whisper of her voice and the soft caresses of her love, women soothe pain with only the breath of their serene words and their tranquil presence.

There is no doubt that in armed conflict valiant, exceptional and extraordinary attitudes produce heroes. But just as there are heroic acts forged in the heat of battle, there are also those forged in the battle for life, in times of peace, exemplary conduct that contributes to peace. Undoubtedly to those heroic feats of war we can attach well-known names, like medals for honour and bravery, but there are also many names of those unknown people who perform epic deeds in peacetime, which, owing solely to their numbers, remain shrouded in the deepest silence.

I come from one of those small nations, as the poet has said, where our history could be written in a teardrop, and I can vouch for this second type of heroism. For example, those self-sacrificing mothers in my homeland, bearing the cross of poverty on their shoulders, with no companionship other than their solitude and the burden of their responsibilities, support and educate their children, so that they can achieve their impossible dreams. They are heroines of peace. There are those dedicated women who, defying prejudice and defeating the inertia of inequality, climbed the mountain peak. They are heroines of peace.

When, in Central America, where I come from, we passed through the bloody polarization of the 1980s, the women who enlisted in any of these civilian trenches to aid the destitute, to care for refugees or take part in the reconstruction of their homeland were, unquestionably, heroines of peace. When, in my country, we suffered the impact of a brutal natural disaster that shattered the geography of our country into hundreds of pieces, like a jigsaw puzzle, all of those compatriots and those women who came from other parts of the world as members of volunteer missions, to help in that moment of misfortune, to repair lives, to breathe encouragement to the griefstricken — they were all heroines of peace.

The immigrants who, desperate and hopeless, leave their beloved homeland, risking everything, even their lives, to reach a destination that offers a way to provide for their kin — and who, ironically, with their remittances, help sustain the sickly economy of the country from which they fled — they are heroines of peace. There is no

greater contribution than acts of solidarity, large and small, that brighten the darkness, that make coexistence easier and lighten the heavy burden of life. That woman, who is real, who exists everywhere, and whom we do not see, because we have become accustomed to her silent, daily, constant and untiring presence; that stranger who, without monument or tribute, builds peace every day, because the cry of suffering, the agony of tribulation, has neither nationality nor borders.

I close with the deepest recognition of every heroic act, but with a feeling of great admiration for all the heroes and heroines of peace.