

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 28 2011, Security Council Chamber

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Chowdhary, Representative of India

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this open debate on the important theme of “Women’s participation and role in conflict prevention and mediation” as part of our ongoing deliberations on women and peace and security.

We have before us the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/598*), and have been briefed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Executive Director of UN-Women Ms. Michelle Bachelet, President of the Economic and Social Council Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, and non-governmental organization representative Ms. Orzala Ashraf Nemat. I would like to thank them for their comprehensive briefings.

It also needs to be recognized that the issue of women and peace and security has several crosscutting and multidimensional implications. Therefore, the need for discussing such issues in the universal forum, the General Assembly, cannot be overemphasized.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women remain the key focus area of social development and distributive justice globally. Empowering women politically, economically, educationally and legally has been a major objective of the Government of India. We are proud of the fact that India gave women equal voting rights more than 60 years ago, at the time of our independence. In 1992, we amended our Constitution and reserved 33 per cent of the seats for women in local- and district-level governance institutions and bodies. That was subsequently raised to 50 per cent in 2009. Currently, we have more than 1.5 million elected women representatives in local bodies. That is the biggest mobilization of women worldwide in politics at the local Government and the rural and district levels.

The five-year plans formulated by the Government of India for economic development recognize the important role of women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change by incorporating proposals on gender empowerment. Women’s empowerment is essential to promote overall sustainable development. That is also true in conflict situations. We believe that the participation of women in all stages of the peace process — conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction — is essential for lasting peace and security.

Key aspects of post-conflict reconstruction, such as economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy, all require the active engagement of women. Resolution 1325 (2000) was a seminal piece of international legislation in our efforts on women and peace and security. The United Nations, Member States and civil society have made steady and noticeable efforts in implementing the resolution. However, the results remain mixed, with important gaps remaining in fully realizing its provisions.

The United Nations system has come up with a comprehensive set of indicators to assess progress in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We have certainly taken note of those indicators. We believe that such indicators and benchmarks need to be further discussed and conceptually developed as part of broader intergovernmental consultations

before their eventual adoption. One must also be cognizant of the difficulty in obtaining credible and verifiable data, in particular from conflict situations.

The United Nations is being asked to do more with regard to women and peace and security, including through the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the United Nations system and United Nations peacekeeping missions. We commend the work of the Secretary-General in mainstreaming the gender perspective in the United Nations recruitment process. The number of women at the senior decision-making level and the participation of women in mission planning, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding efforts have increased. Nonetheless, the numbers still remain very low.

As the Secretary-General's report itself points out, the United Nations presence in conflict and post conflict situations — field missions and country teams — must achieve greater coherence and coordination in addressing women and peace and security issues, including through the timely provision of targeted gender expertise.

The appointments of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and a number of women special envoys are also positive developments. It is important that special representatives work in a coordinated manner among themselves and with other United Nations bodies. That is not only to ensure optimal utilization of resources and avoidance of duplication but also to promote greater coherence.

We welcome the efforts of UN-Women to significantly boost United Nations action on the empowerment of women and gender equality, including in the area of women and peace and security. Its efforts need to be supported by all in the United Nations system and by the Member States. The Council, for its part, must make available the resources that are required to implement those mandates.

We agree with all those who support increased deployment of female military and police personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations and the provision to all military and police personnel of appropriate training to effectively discharge their responsibilities. India was the first country to deploy an all-female peacekeeping unit, 100 troops in Liberia in 2007. We have offered to contribute more such units. India is the largest contributor of troops in United Nations history. We are very proud of the exemplary record of our peacekeepers, both men and women, in the protection of women, children and the needy in conflict situations.

The promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls in armed conflict continue to pose a pressing challenge. The Council has in previous resolutions recognized the specific vulnerability of women during conflicts and that they bear a disproportionate brunt of armed conflict, even though they are in most cases not directly engaged in combat. There should be zero tolerance for gender-based violence, and incidents of gender-based violence must be unequivocally condemned. All cases of gender based violence in an armed conflict, whether perpetrated by parties to the conflict, peacekeeping personnel or humanitarian actors, must be promptly investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.

The international community must take all necessary steps to ensure the security of women and children. We also see civil society and local communities as valued partners in this endeavour, and we look forward to working with them to take this agenda forward.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm India's commitment to positively contributing to United Nations efforts in protecting vulnerable sectors, including women and children, in conflict and post-conflict situations. I also call upon the international community to enhance cooperation by providing resources and sharing experience and expertise to build capacity in this area.